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TOM SYLVESTER

A NOVEL

BY

T. R. SULLIVAN

*"In the reproof of chance
Lies the true proof of men"*

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA



NEW YORK

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

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TO

Joseph Sargent

THE FRIEND OF ALL MY YEARS



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Part 1.

“MY CHILD, WE ONCE WERE CHILDREN”





CHAPTER I.

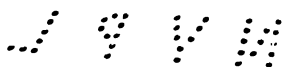
YOUNG IDEAS

MATHEMATICALLY speaking, there is, perhaps, no more variable quantity than that of age. We can all remember the middle-aged man whom in our innocence we took to be an old one, until, on a fine summer morning, we found ourselves almost abreast of him in the race toward the mysterious goal to which we are all tending. Did the discovery make us feel any older? Not a bit of it. We merely smiled at our own near-sightedness, and went on faster than before. As the years grow shorter when we advance among them a little, so perhaps do the centuries; and this long nineteenth one of ours may have brought what we reverently call the Old World no farther than its first childhood. Who knows how many times nineteen such temporal divisions must still elapse before it will become, as children say, "really and truly" old?

However that may be, our New World of the Western hemisphere is surely in its infancy. One need only leave it for a year or so to have that fact brought home to him. If he loves a country landscape, he will find some favorite

dimple deepened into a furrow, or, perhaps, distorted by man's ill-treatment into a blemish. If he has made his home in the city, he will hardly recognize his own street when he turns into it again. Our fathers and grandfathers foresaw the demands of their posterity very dimly; and the solid walls they defended so carefully from the cunning ravages of time go down before us every day like the toy pagodas of the nursery. We are grown older and wiser now; we want something broader and better; we have studied in strange lands; we build, let us hope, to last. But while the process goes on, its result can only be conjectured; and our oldest cities still lack the completion that the eye delights to dwell upon, and that keeps London always our London, even through an absence of half a lifetime.

Thirty-five years ago the great New England city of Worthingham, which now bristles with slender chimneys and is over-tremulous with the hum of fly-wheels, was a peaceful little settlement nestling in the heart of the wide, green valley it has since overgrown. It was a city, even then, proud of its one theatre, its hall of arts and sciences, and its stone court-house, upon whose dome a gilded Justice poised her impartial scales. But then the absorbing interests of the place were agricultural; and there was no harvesting of crops by machinery in those days. If its affairs moved slowly, they moved also harmoniously. It was the shire-town, and it maintained the county



dignity admirably. Its small society was unaffected and hospitable. The old families had their occasional heart-burnings, but were glad to know each other intimately; the daughters were refined and gentle, content with their corner of the world; if the sons strayed away, they often came back with broader views of life and the air of distinction that accrues from intelligent travel—and so helped to give the unassuming little community its peculiar style, or *cachet*, as the French describe a quality wofully evanescent, easily lost and not easily regained.

That charm is all gone now. It faded away slowly but surely, as the color leaves the petal of a rose. The first puff of steam blighted it. One tall factory-chimney showered down a little soot into an old-fashioned garden, which was soon ploughed up to give the lofty intruder a domineering fellow. So, by degrees, Worthingham outgrew its gentle nature, and became the noisy, manufacturing centre that we know to-day. There are no longer any tiger-lilies and four-o'clocks in its shrunk flower-beds. Everywhere has cropped up a crude, pretentious ugliness, too glaring, assuredly, for endurance. In this later hour, which is but an hour that casts a fleeting shadow upon the dial, it is newer and younger than it used to be. It is like some honest rustic, clad for a day in ill-chosen garments and finding himself ill at ease.

New lamps for old ones! The cry has had a strange fascination for youth ever since Aladdin's

foolish little princess yielded to it. Repentance rarely follows the rash act so swiftly and so bitterly as hers came. Yet it is a fortunate man who has chased but one will-o'-the-wisp into a quagmire; and that "all times when old are good," is the first of those dismal truths the boy inherits when he comes of age.

Worthingham sold out her old lamps rapidly at the tempting prices offered her. Only two or three rusty landmarks of the past are left. The weather-beaten Justice still clings to her perch, with an air of longing to fly away from it if she had the wings; and a brazen chanticleer remains erect and rigid as his own crest upon the apex of a graceful spire, in which hangs a deep-toned bell, inscribed with a grim Latin motto concerning death and the grave. Once, this bell played its melodious part in all the town affairs; now, there is no curfew; even its mid-day summons has been discontinued; and its solemn note of warning, heard at long intervals, seems merely to call attention to the very modern stained glass let into the lengthened windows of the old meeting-house. Shade of Cotton Mather! What has stained glass to do with meeting-houses? It is time to enact a law of taste that shall protect us from disfigurement and mutilation.

The meeting-house, a relic of the eighteenth century, stands beside the broad High Street, but not parallel to it, nor, indeed, to anything. Just over the way, along a sunny hill-side, there was for-

merly a stone terrace, rising twenty feet above the street at the highest point, but sloping away at each end to meet the thoroughfare at its own level. This picturesque method of turning a steep ascent into an easy one may be seen to this day in almost any old New England town. Here, the terrace faced the south and was occupied, thirty odd years ago, by four or five handsome houses. Each stood between its own lawn and garden, quite away from the dust and traffic of the busy street, yet figuring in the city records as part and parcel of it. For the terrace had no name; it was not even called a terrace; it was the High Street, no more, no less; but a few caustic people who did not live there, sometimes spoke of it jocosely as "Gentility Hill."

The jest was based upon an agreeable truth and therefore could not wound. The dwellers upon the terrace smiled complacently when it came home to them. For the Stanhopes and the Rodneys and the Sylvesters were all people of assured position who had long been recognized leaders in their little world. Of course they were genteel; they accepted the name as a simple statement of fact, and soon learned to use it in sober earnest when they talked of their real estate among themselves.

The Sylvester house stood just at the top of the terrace and was less imposing than either of its neighbors. The Rodneys, for instance, lived under a vast white portico, vaguely suggestive of the

Parthenon. But Mark Sylvester, always simple in his tastes, had contented himself with his father's homestead—a plain, square, wooden house of no pretence whatever. Its owner was well on in years, not rich even for that time, but yet in easy circumstances, and strongly attached to his home, where he took comfort for his motto—to that every nook and corner of the place bore witness. He had married a woman of decided character and great refinement, many years his junior. Her taste in all things might have been described as faultless to a point of irritation; for she would spend days of worry over a new carpet or curtain, to suit her ideas of it to a shade. In her youth she had been beautiful, and she carried herself in a superb and stately fashion commanding admiration. About her there seemed to cling a faint perfume, as of lavender many times distilled, that left its trace in all the rooms which she inhabited; through them she moved as gracefully as Copley's women might walk, could they rise from their polished tables and step down from their frames. She entertained well, and though high-spirited, indeed somewhat sharp at repartee, she yet remained a general favorite. No one could afford to be long at odds with her; the whole town agreed in that.

The Sylvesters were very fond of children, and to their sorrow had no daughters. Of their two sons the elder had married, and so passed out of their daily lives. The younger, after his college

career, had developed for foreign travel a passion that seemed bounded only by the indulgence of his father, who honored all his drafts without a murmur; he was still young and still unmarried, and two rooms in the house were his. They were filled with European knick-knacks, bits of bronze and *rosso antico*—all the odd mosaic of remembrances that travel brings; but he rarely occupied them. If it pleased him to come home, to twirl his mustache in the family pew, to be petted and admired and envied, it pleased him still more to go back into the world again. Consequently, he came and went. That his father protested mildly it mattered little, so long as his mother approved; and to give him pleasure she would have packed his trunk for the North Pole, with a mere word of caution against the climate. "He can have but one youth," she would say; "and it will soon be over. Do let the boy enjoy it!" meanwhile, he remained a good correspondent, and she liked to quote his letters.

Thus it will be seen that a tinge of loneliness deepened the shadows of the Sylvester house in what proved to be its old age—for the very stones of the terrace have been dislodged these ten years. The place grew terribly still, at times; so that, occasionally, in the summer twilight, the maids fluttered through certain of its dark passages with their aprons over their heads, and declared that a ghostly foot-fall had followed them. But Mark Sylvester and his wife had a host of relatives whom they

welcomed warmly, even down to the second and third generation. Their poor relations made long visits, and for the time almost forgot that they were poor. The children they brought with them had the freedom of the store-closet; of the great sunny garden; and were dragged away with tears in their eyes at parting with the hostess. Her sharpest moment had a certain humorous quaintness in it for these small visitors. They worshipped their "Aunt Sylvester," as she liked to be called, even by those who had no real claim to relationship. And by common consent she became, latterly, "Aunt Sylvester" to the whole neighborhood.

Early in life her favorite sister had married Mark Sylvester's younger brother Tom, the handsomest and wildest of all the Sylvesters; and the children of this marriage, which had turned out unhappily, were from this double connection, always made doubly welcome at the house. Especially the youngest, Tom, named for the father who had never known him, but who, about the time of the boy's birth, had become a memory that was far from pleasant. Tom's mother, an amiable, mild-tempered woman, had been left with a very slender income to bring up her children as best she might. They lived in a small house at the other end of the town, upon family pride, the neighbors said, though Mark Sylvester could have explained the matter, probably, in a more satisfactory way. With true generosity he held to the

text, and would never give before men to be seen of them.

Tom, at the age of eleven, was a slender little fellow with straight, black hair and brown eyes, that had a wandering look. His face was too thin and sallow to be handsome, and was called interesting only on account of the pleasant smile which lighted it up infrequently, considering his time of life. Precocious and full of grotesque fancies, he passed in a moment from high spirits to brooding-fits that were often unaccountable. His sister Jane, being much older than he, felt it her duty to cure these attacks of despondency. She would follow him about, holding a glass before his face and calling him Knight of the Rueful Countenance, and other absurd names; and, in the end, she would generally succeed in making him laugh in spite of himself. But it distressed her to find him always at his best and happiest away from home.

He had other defects that made her anxious. He was shy and cautious and timid, caring too little for out-of-door sports to suit her ideas. His fondness for reading amounted almost to a disease; he had a way of curling up in a corner with a book and losing all note of time, until, in vacation days, she would interfere and drive him out into the sunshine. She spoke of this once to old Larkin, the master of the public school, to which all good Worthingham boys were sent. But the nearest way to the man's affection lay through the

pages of the Latin Grammar, and Tom knew his heterogeneous nouns by heart.

"A little application will do us no harm, I think," said the school-master; "and Tom gets on famously. He is twice the boy his brother Grip used to be."

Guy, or Grip, as he had always been called, was eight years older than Tom, and had flung away his books to learn yarn-spinning like a day-laborer, in a room full of rattling looms. The mill had been put up a mile or two from the town by the Rodneys in an experimental way; but its success already made the old inhabitants shake their heads, for it too plainly foreshadowed a general defacement of the valley. And Grip had shown great aptitude for his new employment; indeed, it was confidently predicted that he would live to control a mill of his own.

Old Larkin's answer roused Jane Sylvester's righteous indignation. Grip came second in the family, but second to no one in her heart.

"I am not troubled about Grip," she said, sharply. "He will make his way in the world."

"He used to write his conjugations on his cuffs," Mr. Larkin retorted.

Jane gave him one look of scorn and flounced off, leaving him alone there upon the curb-stone of the High Street in an attitude of contemplation. He was a bachelor and she had not offended him. On the contrary, as she walked away, he eyed her over his spectacles with a quiet smile.

"Rare people, those Sylvesters!" he murmured.

Jane made her way home with the briskness natural to her, and found Tom in their little parlor, deep in the "Flying City of Laputa." She let him finish his chapter, and then prevailed upon him to put away the book and go out of doors.

He yielded less reluctantly than usual; since he knew of another Gulliver in his uncle's library, where he privately determined to resume the story. But there was no hurry; he had half the morning before him. So he took the longest way, and sauntered down a street leading him almost out of the town and over a hill which gave occasional glimpses of the surrounding country. At one of these points he sat down upon a low stone wall to rest for a moment and enjoy the view. There was not much to see, and he knew it all by heart. But the day, cool for August, had brought with it a light haze, through which the landscape looked its best. Over the rough pasture-land just below him a dusty turnpike led on to distant hills, thickly wooded, high and dark, like barriers to shut in the world. And, indeed, they bounded all the world Tom knew. Down in the road he could make out a peddler's wagon lumbering along on its way to the next town. It was a bright-red wagon, bristling with brooms and laden with strange tin objects that caught the sunlight. He watched it pass out of sight at a turn in the road half-way up his boundary line. Directly over

the place hung a small low-lying cloud; and this brought back into his mind the picture he had just seen of the Flying City of Laputa.

Tom sighed.

"I wonder if I've got to stay here always," he thought. "I wish I could go away and see things, as Hal Rodney does. There would be some fun in that."

His friend Hal had lately journeyed as far as the distant city of New York, which, it appeared, must resemble some fabulous port in Sindbad's voyages. Tom longed for a peep at it. But his expressed wish to that effect had been promptly met at home with the assurance that to travel cost a great deal of money, and that he was poor. Poor! That word was known to him well enough already; and at every new turn in the path its ugly combination of letters seemed to stalk before him as if to say: "Go back! There is no room for you!" Upon the familiar answer he had pondered long. Was everything in life to wait upon those crumpled bits of paper of which there seemed such a profusion in the world? Having these, Hal Rodney could go to New York, buy a new bow and arrows, wear new clothes, and own all the leaden soldiers that he wanted. Everything to make people happy came with money, and he, Tom Sylvester, had none of it. How could he be happy? And why should Jane wonder that he was miserable?

In making these reflections he had not grudged Hal any of his good fortune; nor did he now, as

he went over the same ground again, looking out along the road that led, he supposed, straight to the vast, unknown city and the sea. The boys were the best of friends; they did not quarrel oftener than once a month, and, after a day or two apart were easily reconciled. Their natures were very unlike, and so had become almost essential to each other. Hal had a ready wit and took the lead always in a matter-of-fact way, but with a half-unconscious respect for Tom's imaginative qualities. Of this mental deference, Tom had no suspicion. He simply admired Hal, and liked to be led by him, usually. Moreover, he thought nothing too good for him, and he would not have robbed him of a feather to make his own pillow softer. But it did seem hard, sometimes, that there were not feathers enough for two.

The small cloud took to itself another shape and melted away. And Tom, rousing himself from his dismal little reverie, strolled back into the town again; and then out of it once more, up through the stable-yard of his uncle's house.

This sunny nook, lying directly under the kitchen windows, always looked as if it had been swept and garnished for some state occasion. The gravel had the trimness of a lawn, and the broad flag-stones of the path shone like polished metal. Two or three fan-tailed pigeons murmured pleasantly at the stable-eaves, while under a tall Bartlett pear-tree that grew out of a grass-plot in the corner, Morris, coachman, groom, and man-of-all-work in

one, was rubbing down a horse and hissing, as he did so, in a soothing manner.

Tom went up to watch this operation.

"What do you make that noise for?" he demanded.

"To set young gentlemen a-thinking up conundrums," Morris answered.

"That's a whopper!" returned Tom, bluntly. "What good does it do the horse, I should like to know?"

"Cheers him up," said Morris; "makes him feel sociable and friendly, I suppose. Them doves wants corn, I guess," he went on, as one flew down and spread his tail before them. "Hist out a little, Tommy, will you?"

"All right!" said Tom, dashing off into the stable and up to the second floor for the corn.

"I'll be blowed if he ain't the oddest feller," reflected Morris. "What do I make that noise for! Eh, Major?" And he hissed again louder than ever.

Tom opened one of the shutters overhead, and at the sound the yard was in a moment white with pigeons. He teased them for a while playfully, throwing out at last corn enough for twice their number.

Morris interfered.

"Your appetite's pretty good, I suspect," said he. "Hold up, or we'll be eating doves for dinner. Seen Squire Rodney's boy this morning?"

"Hal?" said Tom. "No; I haven't. He can

find me in the house if he likes. I'm going in to read." And he swung out of the stable window, dropping on all-fours with a thud among the frightened pigeons.

"You'd better not," returned Morris, who wanted to see Tom more "rugged," as he expressed it, and who had a splendid contempt for knowledge which could be bound and shelved. "Hal's got something very particular to show you."

"What is it?" Tom asked, eagerly.

But before Morris had time to answer, there came a shrill cry, agreed upon by the boys as a signal among themselves, and then Hal Rodney, round, rosy, and curly-haired, vaulted the low fence and stood before them, trying to find breath enough to speak.

"Tom"—he gasped; "Tom—I've got—a tent!"

Now this was something that the boys had longed for ardently, and the announcement was quite enough to turn the current of Tom's thoughts.

"Where? How big is it? Show it to me!" he cried, Gulliver and the library and his own wretchedness all overruled.

"Out in the back garden—it's a beauty! Come and see!"

The boys ran down between Mark Sylvester's well-trimmed borders, leaping over flower-beds and dodging a clump of prickly raspberry-bushes, full of ripe fruit, that would have tempted them to

stop for it at another time. Just beyond, a sumach hedge with crimson plumes, fine to look at, but desperately sticky to the touch, marked the boundary line between the Sylvester and the Rodney gardens. They wrestled a moment with the tough lower branches, and then emerged upon Hal's playground behind the asparagus-bed in a neglected corner of his father's place. There was the tent, pitched in the long grass under the shade of an old catalpa-tree, that stretched its heart-shaped leaves and long, slender seed-vessels over from the Sylvester side in a neighborly way. Nothing pleases a boy more than to play at being his own master; and though his four walls be but strips of canvas, they are none the less castle-walls to him. So Tom inspected his friend's new possession inside and out with delight, and, finding that it enclosed more than room enough for two, pronounced it perfect.

"It would be fine to live here always, wouldn't it?" said Hal. "When it rained we could shut it up so, and keep out the caterpillars and things;" and he drew the flaps of the tent together around them.

"Yes," said Tom, seized with a new idea. "After dinner, let's come out here and take the veil."

"What's that?" asked Hal, mystified.

"It's what they do in convents," replied Tom, to whom monastery and convent were one and the same; "they shut themselves up and swear to stay

there always, and never to see anything that goes on outside."

"Can't they look out?" Hal demanded.

"No," said Tom.

"And if they do?"

"Then they get their walking-ticket—that's all."

"It's a good idea," said Hal, pleased at the novel prospect of voluntary seclusion; "after dinner, we'll bring plenty of things to eat—lots of buns and chocolate."

"And books to read," Tom put in.

"Yes, books," repeated Hal, thoughtfully, "and lemonade. And I say, suppose we ask Pug Stanhope and his sister Clover. There's room enough for four."

"All right," Tom agreed.

"But I haven't any veil. Have you?"

"No," said Tom; "but Clover, has. It will do for all of us."

So, after further consultation, they parted, pledging themselves to meet there again at an early hour of the afternoon. Tom promised to provide the books, and Hal was to see the Stanhopes, and to "hook," as he expressed it, as much food as he could carry.

All Worthingham in those days dined early and took a siesta afterward. A delicious drowsiness settled down upon the place at that hour of the hot summer afternoon, when the town was so still that anywhere a bee could be heard booming in and out of the garden palings; and up and down

the long High Street the horses stood switching their tails in the shade, and munching their oats from the bags tied under their noses—while the shops were empty, and even the sidewalks seemed deserted. At this time Mark Sylvester always slept upon a brown leather sofa in his library, with a handkerchief carefully spread over his face to keep away the flies. Therefore Tom, who dined that day at his uncle's table, made a hurried meal and ran off before the dessert was brought in; this to the disappointment of his hospitable relatives, who liked to draw the boy into subjects rather too deep for his comprehension, upon which he always tried to speak profoundly.

There was very little doubt that Tom would have been granted permission to carry off all the books his arms could hold, but he had a nervous dread of being laughed at, and preferred not to unfold his plans for the afternoon. So he decided to make off with the plunder before his uncle left the dining-room. He chose first his *Gulliver*, then Irving's "Tales of a Traveller," and Thackeray's "Rose and Ring," in all of which he took great delight; but he found it hard to fix upon a fourth book.

"I must have one more," he said to himself, mounting the step-ladder at last, and looking to right and left along the upper shelves until he caught sight of a large volume lying on its side in a dark corner. He had never noticed that before, and he took it down. The book proved to

be an old magazine of art, full of pictures. Some careful hand had covered its showy binding with brown paper upon which a thick layer of dust had settled. Evidently it had not been disturbed for years.

"It's just the very thing," he thought, closing the covers and dusting them with his sleeve. Then he wheeled the ladder back into its place, threw the books one by one out of the window, climbed down after them, and, dodging all the servants, made his escape unperceived.

The others were waiting for him.

"How late you are!" said Clover Stanhope. She was ten years old and a bright child, whose looks did her injustice. There are plain children upon whom one hesitates to pass a hasty opinion, so often does the ugly duckling turn into a swan. But her features appeared to be beyond all hope of such redemption; there were no two that matched. She had, moreover, a comicality almost clown-like. Her hair, neither brown nor black, but a color just between, was tied behind in two little knobs that might one day grow into braids. With more than the usual angularity of her age, she seemed all awkwardness and elbow—red and rough elbow, at that. "Poor Clover!" said everybody but the boys, who objected to her less than to other girls; and she lacked something of the softness of her sex in consequence. Around her straw hat she had twisted, turban-like, a blue gauze veil; and over one arm she carried a small

satchel made of twine, through the meshes of which Tom could see the pink wrapper of a roll of checker-berry lozenges. He liked lozenges, and Clover was his friend.

"I couldn't come earlier," he said; "I had to steal these, you know;" and he threw down the books.

"How funny!" Clover exclaimed, as she read their names. "I brought this, too!" and she held up her own copy of "The Rose and the Ring."

"Haw!" said her brother, who liked to be always in the opposition. "I don't think much of that book!" Then he opened the magazine of art, and began to inspect it critically.

Pug, whose name was Sidney, was the oldest of the four children. He had coarse red hair and freckles. If these surviving Stanhopes were the fittest of their race, what strange types must have been lost in the process of extinction!

Hal's face appeared in the doorway of the tent. "I've been trying the lemonade," said he; "come inside—it's jolly here!"

They found his cloth, an old shawl, laid upon the grass; it was furnished forth with sticks of chocolate in silver paper, apples, English walnuts, and a sheet of buns—beside the great pitcher of lemonade, in which the melting ice clicked invitingly. To these things Clover added her lozenges, and Pug, like a conjurer, pulled from his pockets jumbles and more jumbles, some completely crushed, all the worse for wear. Hal im-

mediately took one ; the lemonade, he said, had made him hungry.

"Now," said Tom, closing the door of the tent behind them, "no one must look out any more."

"What will happen, if we do?" Pug asked.

"It will spoil the game. The first one that sees the sky, or the trees, or anything outside, will have to be excommunicated."

"What's that?" inquired Clover.

"Pitched out;" explained Hal, proud of his knowledge.

"Then I shall put down my veil," she replied.

"There! I can't see anything. It won't be me, whoever it is."

They curled themselves up like four small Turks around Hal's feast. There was little room to spare, and the ground was not particularly comfortable. But it was too soon to think of these things. The leaves made pretty shadows on their white canvas walls; there was plenty to eat, and they munched away for a time in silence, with the continuous appetite of healthy childhood.

"What shall we do?" asked Pug, at last, between two bites at a bun.

"I'll tell you," said his sister. "Let's read aloud. We'll all take turns. Tom shall begin."

"All right!" Tom agreed. He could read very well, and he liked to hold an audience in his control. "I've got a first-rate ghost story here."

"Let's have it, then! Fire away!" said Hal and Pug together.

So Tom gave them in his best manner, "The Adventure of My Uncle," from "The Tales of a Traveller." Now and then he looked up from the book to assure himself that their interest was properly sustained. The turret-clock, which at midnight struck thirteen, produced a marked effect. And Clover leaned forward with parted lips at the entrance of the spectral lady in high-heeled shoes. But the abrupt ending was received by the boys with emphatic disapproval.

"That's no kind of a story!" Pug exclaimed. "Why, I could write a better one myself."

"Don't be a fool!" said Tom. "This one is by an author."

"What's an author, anyhow?" said Hal. "I believe Pug could; he'd have an end to his story, anyway."

"Oh, Pug thinks he can do anything," Tom replied. "Perhaps Washington Irving didn't know how to write."

"I liked it, Tom," said Clover. "But I wish you hadn't read it. I shall be afraid to go home."

"You needn't worry about that yet," Pug objected. "Here's a story that will make your hair curl."

His tastes were bloody, and he read them a harrowing tale of adventure from the pen of a prolific writer whose books made a strong appeal to all boys of the time. Pug had an immense admiration for the man who could devise such things, and whom he imagined to be a giant of the prairie with coal-black eyes, flashing under a hat Mephisto-plumed.

Many years afterward, in another quarter of the world, Tom fell in with a little round-shouldered, insignificant apology of a being, who proved to be the substance of Pug's shadowy ideal. Ah! *si jeunesse savait. . . .!*

Just at the crisis of the great story, which was called "The Yellow Scalp," when the reader's voice was trembling with excitement, Clover gave a piercing shriek, followed by a backward plunge so violent that it brought the tent down about their ears. With smothered indignation the boys tried to set it up again from the inside; but this scheme was completely foiled by Clover, now become frantic both in her struggles and in her screams. So that soon the whole party found itself on its feet, as it were, in the upper air.

"What in the devil is the matter?" brutally demanded Pug.

"Stop swearing so!" Clover cried, as soon as she could speak. "It was one of those great black-and-yellow spiders—the poisonous kind. He's on me somewhere now, I know."

The boys looked at each other, and laughed.

"And it's nothing to laugh at, either," she continued; "they bite."

"But you've spoiled all the fun," said Tom; "we had taken the veil, and now everything is broken up."

"No matter," said Hal, lifting up a corner of the tent. "We can go back again and take it some more."

"Yes, all but Clover," Pug cried spitefully. "It's all her fault—she can't belong."

"No, she can't belong," echoed the others.

It took some time to set up the tent again; Clover moved away a little, and watched them with a swelling heart, the venomous spider quite forgotten.

"I don't care," she said, at last, proclaiming with childish simplicity the very contrary in her tone. "Your story was just horrid; and I hate to sit on the ground, without any back to it; and you're a set of nasty, mean boys—all of you!"

These last words were aimed at Tom, whom she particularly liked. He understood her, and fired up instantly.

"Give her all her things and let her go," said he, tossing the poor little twine satchel toward her into the long grass. She caught it up, and then found a stone to throw at them. It fell wide of the mark down among the sumach leaves.

"Two can play at that," said Pug, stooping to pick up another stone which was only an imaginary one. But it was enough for Clover, who darted away, with the long, blue veil streaming straight out behind her.

"She's excommunicated," said Tom, as the boys went back to put their house in order.

"Serves us right for playing with girls," growled Hal. "Hullo! here's all the lemonade tipped over."

The ground had absorbed it for the most part,

but little standing pools were left here and there upon the covers of the books. Tom mopped the volume of Irving with his handkerchief, and looked grave. Meanwhile, Pug finished the tale of adventure, but the interest in it seemed to flag a little.

"Let's not read any more," suggested Hal. "I'd rather look at pictures ; these are good."

He had opened the old magazine at a rude print of Paris—a bit of the city island, with the Pont Neuf, Henri Quatre on horseback, and the towers of Notre-Dame. Tom drew nearer and looked at the picture wistfully.

"Paris ! I wonder if we shall ever go there," said he.

"I shall," replied Hal, confidently. "My father means to take us all abroad for two or three years."

"When ?" asked Tom.

"I don't know—some time—when he has made money enough."

"He makes a lot, doesn't he ?"

"Heaps !"

"Then he is rich."

"Yes, I suppose so," said Hal, carelessly, turning over the leaves for more pictures. But Tom had lost his interest in the book. He relapsed into silence, and began to picture to himself the future, with the contrast it was likely to bring into their lives.

The book was heavy, and Hal awkwardly let it slip out of his hand. When he picked it up, his

eye caught sight of a signature in ink on the fly-leaf.

"Hullo, Tom!" said he; "I didn't know you wrote like that."

Over Hal's shoulder Tom read the name—T. Sylvester; that was all, in a strong, clear hand, without flourish of any kind. He knew at once that it must have been written by the father of whom he had no remembrance; of whom no likeness existed that he had ever seen; whose name by common consent was never spoken by the older members of the family, and whose handwriting he now studied for the first time. But there was no need of telling the boys all this.

"That's my father's writing," he said. "Let me see it, Hal."

There was no doubt, of course. This must have been his father's book. He handled it carefully now, curiosity and tenderness mingling with an old wonder of his at the silence which always crushed him at home when he ventured to ask some question about his father. A constrained silence it was, as if it kept from him something known to the others which he ought not to know.

What a good hand his father wrote! He searched the other fly-leaves for more of it. They were blank. He found no other writing in the book except upon a loose half-sheet of letter paper that slipped out from among the printed pages. On one side of this his uncle seemed to have scrawled his name idly over and over again; there it was—

Mark Sylvester—twenty times at least, in a cramped hand with a backward stroke, by way of finish. He knew his uncle's signature perfectly. He liked his father's better. The bit of paper was yellow with age; it had served for a book-mark, probably, long ago. Mechanically, he dropped it back again at the old place.

A new turn was given to his thoughts by Hal, with one of those heedless questions which children often put to one another.

"Tom," he asked, suddenly, "where is your father buried?" Then, as Tom did not reply upon the instant, he went on: "He's not in the cemetery, you know."

This was a fact set apart in his busy little brain, upon the occasion of his last visit to that rural resting-place—a favorite resort of the townspeople on Sunday afternoons. The signature in the book reminded him that he had intended to inquire into this before.

"Abroad," said Tom, flushing a little without knowing why.

"Oh," continued Hal, "I couldn't find his name on the tomb, you see, and— Whereabouts abroad?"

"Somewhere in France," Tom replied, with his cheeks now an angry crimson. This was a fib—a very small one; his father's burial-place he really did not know.

"Oh," said Hal again, wisely dropping the question. "Hullo! Pug's asleep. Wake up, Puggy,"

and he threw the last jumble with so sure an aim that it broke in two upon his friend's nose.

"I ain't," said Pug, starting up. "I was thinking. We fellows ought to get up a secret society—just we three, you know. We could meet here. It's a bully place, and——"

"That's so," broke in Hal; "it's a good idea."

"First-rate," said Tom. "What shall we call it?"

This was a timely question, and the object of their association at once became of secondary importance.

"The name must be a secret," Pug continued. "We can use the letters that stand for it, but we must all be initiated and take a solemn oath never to divulge the name."

Pug's command of language became impressive. The others were awed into silence for a moment or two, until Hal ventured to suggest that somebody might guess the name, after all.

"If we have sworn," said Pug, fiercely, "we must lie about it."

"Or change it," proposed Tom, timidly.

"Lie first and change it afterward," Pug returned, in a tone that settled the matter, to which he had evidently given serious thought.

And then all three proceeded to cudgel their brains for a name of deadly significance. The suggestions, chiefly of the ghoul and vampire variety, were voted down one after another until to Pug, the prime mover, a new thought occurred.

"Let us call it the N. G. S.," said he.

"No good?" guessed Hal. "No go?"

Pug shook his head.

"I know," said Tom; "it means 'no girls.'"

"How did you guess?" asked Pug, discomfited.

"Because it's too easy. Call it 'Death on Girls,' and nobody will know."

"Death on Girls Society," said Hal. "D. O. G. S.—Dogs! That's a splendid name!"

"First-rate!" the others agreed.

"And we mustn't play with girls, or speak to them even—except at home, where we have to," prescribed Pug, as Article First of the Society Constitution.

"Not even Clover?" demanded Tom, doubtfully.

"Clover? of course not," promptly returned her brother.

"Perhaps Tom doesn't want to belong," suggested Hal, with sarcasm.

"Yes, I do," Tom protested. "Only Clover won't like it."

"Who cares?" said Pug. "She's only a girl, any way."

"All right—I'll belong."

Thus did Tom, upon the instant, renounce his friendship for poor Clover, who, finding herself left out in the cold, laid it all to the accident of the black-and-yellow spider, and thought her case a hard one. But she made no complaint; and in this there was wisdom beyond her years. For children, in their dealings with one another, are often pitiless

as grand inquisitors, and a cry of pain may but lead to a new turn of the thumb-screw. Perhaps our hearts are not born with us, but come later like our wisdom-teeth—when they come at all.

It took much thought to found the society, and when the boys separated there were long sharp shadows cutting into the golden light of the afternoon. Tom gathered up his books soberly ; they must be returned to their shelves before he went home, and that unlucky lemonade-stain he did not altogether like.

The boys bade him good-night as he pushed his way through the hedge ; and he responded cheerily. Then his face fell. The wide garden was at its best and sweetest when he came out into it, but to no purpose for him. He had opened the old volume at the fly-leaf, to study the name again all the way along the path between the china-asters and the marigolds.

“I wonder where my father is really buried,” thought he.

CHAPTER II.

HALF A PAGE OF THE PAST

TOM opened the door of the library cautiously.

"No one!" he said to himself, and took a step into the room.

"Come in!" called a pleasant voice, so vigorously that Tom was startled, and almost dropped the books. Then his uncle looked out of the curtained recess of the window, and saw him.

"Ah, Tom, is that you? Come in, my boy. It's only Mr. Hazeltine—you know Mr. Hazeltine."

Tom did know Mr. Hazeltine, and stood very much in awe of him; chiefly, because boys always seemed to be very much in Mr. Hazeltine's way. There was certainly nothing terrible either in the looks or the behavior of his uncle's old friend, whose figure came and went through the house like that of a familiar spirit. He was a little man, old before his time, with nothing very distinctive about him except that he seemed to be all of one color; for he usually wore gray clothes, and his ferret-like eyes were almost as gray as his closely cropped, pointed beard, through which there trailed a great, untrimmed mustache, gray too. When

he smiled the ends of this mustache went up, his eyes closed, and his wrinkles deepened, so that he looked less like a terrier and more like a Nuremberg nut-cracker. But he did not smile often ; and one felt that it was better so.

Mr. Hazeltine had been brought up in Mark Sylvester's employ ; and when the latter resigned his post as president of the Worthingham Bank, Mr. Hazeltine also retired, to sit down upon his little property, he said. But the two men continued to be intimate, and to consider rates of discount, commercial credits, and other of their neighbors' affairs. Mr. Hazeltine rarely talked of anything but business ; and Tom was inclined to believe that he really kept his property in bulk at home, and that he squatted there upon a heap of money-bags to count dollars and cents for his recreation. Sooner or later, he was sure, all men of business habits must turn into just such dry, distasteful creatures ; and with all his longing for wealth, he determined that he could never be a business man.

Mr. Hazeltine acknowledged Tom's approach by a slight movement of the eyebrows, and then, drawing back into the window for better light, effaced himself behind the columns of a newspaper. Tom would have liked to run away. But his uncle evidently wished to keep him. Could it be that he had grown tired of Mr. Hazeltine ?

"What have you been about, Tom ?" he asked. "Books, eh ? Well, let me see what books you are reading ?" Tom put them down in a chair at his

uncle's side, and feared that he was in for a lecture. But not from any sign of displeasure in Mark Sylvester's expansive face, which suggested the Silenus type, with most of the objectionable qualities refined away. "Irving? Ah, I used to like him myself. That's a very good book—very good, indeed. Thackeray—'Rose and Ring'—never knew he wrote such a book." Then he saw the portrait of King Valoroso XXIV. and laughed. "Is it funny, Tom?"

"Yes," said Tom, calling attention to the rhyming head-lines of the pages. "See—that's poetry!"

His uncle read a line or two, turned over the leaves, read on, and laughed again; while Tom stood by, quietly enjoying his enjoyment.

"I must read this," he said, finally, putting the book aside. "Now, what have we here?"

He took up the old magazine, which opened of itself at the loose sheet covered with specimens of his own signature in faded ink, lying just where Tom had found it. This seemed to puzzle him: he examined it curiously, and then turned back to the fly-leaf, where the other name was written.

Mr. Hazeltine, meanwhile, having compressed his newspaper into very small compass and stowed it away in his pocket, moved toward the door without the formality of a leave-taking.

"Where did you find this book, Tom?" asked Mr. Sylvester.

"There—on the top shelf," Tom replied. "I suppose it belonged to my father."

"Yes," said his uncle. "Jerry!" and at this call, Mr. Hazeltine, who was already out of the room, came gravely back to the window.

"Jerry," continued Mr. Sylvester, "this book belonged to my brother Tom—do you see?"

Mr. Hazeltine read the name upon the fly-leaf, and nodded. At the same moment, Mark Sylvester silently passed him the loose sheet of paper, and in so doing gave him a curious look that Tom failed to observe.

Then, while Tom's uncle began to ask questions about the pictures, Mr. Hazeltine drew nearer the light again, and stood there a moment with his back to the others. When he turned, Mark Sylvester looked at him with eyebrows raised interrogatively, and Mr. Hazeltine affirmatively shut his eyes.

"I suppose I had better put that with the other things," he said, in a low tone, admirably clear and sweet. His voice was the best thing about Mr. Hazeltine. In youth he had been known to sing.

As he spoke, he touched lightly his gray breast, as if he held a secret there. He could not have referred to the newspaper, though he took that from his side-pocket and tried to roll it tighter still.

"Yes," answered Mr. Sylvester, frowning a little. "Any news?"

"The Bank of England has lowered its rate a quarter," said Mr. Hazeltine. "That's all—good-night." And he was gone, this time in earnest.

"I was named for my father, wasn't I?" said

Tom, when they were alone. He was aware of the fact, but asked the question to introduce another.

"Yes, of course, my boy. He was Tom Sylvester, too."

"Then may I have his book, Uncle Mark?"

"Why, yes—to-morrow. You will trust me with it until the morning, won't you?"

Tom laughed at the mere idea of ever distrusting his uncle in anything. But another thought crossed his mind, and he grew grave again.

"Uncle," he asked, "where is my father buried?"

The room seemed to grow very still all at once—so still, that Tom could hear the ticking of the clock upon the mantel. In the silence he held his breath, waiting for the answer—but there was none. Then he turned and looked his uncle full in the face. That look could not be left unanswered.

Mark Sylvester turned away his face, and passed his hand over his eyes. "Tom," he said gently, "it is time for you to know the truth, and best, perhaps, that I should be the one to tell you. Your father is alive."

"Alive?" repeated Tom, as if this were some new word of unknown meaning. "Alive?"

"Yes—but not here. He has gone away and will never come back—he cannot. If he were really dead, it would be better, perhaps, for you, better for us all."

"Is he in prison?" asked Tom, his imagination on the alert at once.

"No, but he has disgraced himself. He ill-treated your mother, and behaved badly in many ways that you would not understand. Until at last he went away—there was no help for it. It was I who sent him off—here, in this very room."

Tom looked about him as if trying to picture to himself that scene between the brothers.

"Was it long ago?" he asked.

"Yes—before you were born."

"Then how do you know he is alive?"

"He lives in Europe—exactly how or where, I do not know. But he was alive three months ago, I am sure of that. He is a bad fellow, Tom. You have nothing to hope for from him. Never see him, if you can help it. You must believe that I would not say this of my brother and your father, unless it were absolutely true."

And Mark Sylvester laid his hand lightly upon Tom's shoulder, and drew the boy closer to his knee.

"Your brother and sister know this, of course. I have told you only what you must have discovered in some way before long. You will learn more in time, and I do not think that you will blame me. Be careful not to distress your mother by asking questions at home. Do you understand?"

"Yes, uncle. Did he commit a murder?"

"No, my boy, it never came to anything so ter-

rible as that. But it was bad business. Do not think of him more than you can help. You have nothing in common with him but your name. Remember that it rests with you to make that a good one."

"Is there any picture of him, Uncle Mark?"

"No—none that I know of. He had dark hair, but his eyes were gray, and not like yours. I can remember him at your age. He lost his good looks afterward."

Then he stroked the boy's hair gently, pushed back his chair, and went over to look at the sunset.

"But, uncle"—Tom insisted.

"There—that will do. No more questions. It is time for you to go home. Good-night."

Tom did not answer, but he made for the door obediently.

His uncle stopped him at the threshold.

"Tom!" he called.

"Yes, Uncle Mark."

"You can trust me? You are sure?"

"Yes."

"Then, good-night. You shall have your book to-morrow."

"Good-night."

And Tom was off at a bound.

Mark Sylvester lingered so long at the window that the darkness of the room startled him when he turned back into it. He groped his way to the writing-table, where stood a great astral lamp which he lighted.

“The iniquity of the fathers upon the children,” he murmured, mournfully. “Not always, I hope.”

He took a cigar, gave a few fierce puffs at it and laid it down. Then he put on his eye-glasses, after polishing them deliberately with a corner of his yellow silk handkerchief. And finally, with a sigh, he drew toward him Tom's book and searched it thoroughly, page by page. But he was relieved to find no further traces of handwriting there.

CHAPTER III.

POOR GENTILITY

IN a country where all men are born free and equal, the cruel parent has a hard time of it. The man who disowns his daughter, nowadays, for marrying against his will, is waited upon very promptly by a reporter for the morning paper, and finds popular prejudice so strongly opposed to him, that he is forced to relent far more speedily than the stern, unyielding fathers did of old. Yet each one of us, in his limited circle of acquaintance, can count the ill-assorted marriages by the dozen; and hears constantly much argument in favor of the French system of marriage first and courtship afterward. It is true that this view is held chiefly by spinsters and bachelors of a certain age; or else by elderly fathers and mothers, who married themselves early in the good American way. The young people persist in staking all upon an impulse, rarely asking advice, never heeding it; and tyrant custom, grown old enough to know better, calmly nods and smiles at them.

When the younger of the two pretty but impetuous Valentine girls became engaged to Mark Sylvester, the world said it was an excellent thing.

And the world was right. Not rich, but prudent and eminently respectable, he made her a good husband; and she lived happy ever after. But when Miss Valentine, like Desdemona, forsook many noble matches to fall in love with the younger brother, the world shook its head and said she would live to regret it. And again the world was right, though it was never permitted to have the poor satisfaction of saying to her: "I told you so." She simply refused to pose as a martyr, and bore her trials with a kind of unconscious sweetness which had always been characteristic of her. She knew how to be resigned and cheerful at the same time; and she was said to have inherited the "Valentine pluck," which was one of the family traditions. So, when her husband took of her what, literally, might be called French leave (for his departure was currently believed to be in some measure due to an actress of that light-hearted nation), she left all the just wrath to her sister, shed her tears alone, and in the public eye controlled herself with a resolute simplicity, truly admirable. Perhaps, after all, the final shock, severe as it was, brought its compensating relief. For he had neglected her shamefully, that was certain; and this fact led to a strong suspicion that he had ill-treated her, too; but by no word or sign did she ever confirm this report; on the contrary, she loved him to the end, as she would have continued to love him had the end proved far more terrible. No one ever tried to reason her out of this; had

the attempt been made, she would have found her answer readily: "I love him"—no more, no less. There is infinite pathos in the clinging fondness of a good woman for an unworthy object. Neither persuasion nor force can influence in the smallest degree that strange hold, which only death relaxes; which is only a little less stubborn in its blind tenacity of purpose than the grasp of a drowning hand.

She had a small income, resulting from a certain fortunate speculation of her husband, made with his brother's help, upon the wise condition that the profit should be hers. To eke out this, in a way to bring up her children decently, kept her mind busy enough for the first few years. Later, her daughter Jane took a large share of this burden upon her own shoulders. The girl was fond of children and maintained stoutly that the labor of teaching them was a joyful trouble to her; the children liked her, too, which was very much to the purpose. Her school flourished; and the better part of very young Worthingham was always entrusted to her to be trained up in the way it should go. Untiring in her devotion to her mother and her brothers, she was a very practical young woman of a marked New England type; somewhat too sure of herself, perhaps, but with sufficient tact to remember the weaknesses of other people, and to make her own peculiarities more amusing than offensive to them.

They lived in the simplest way, on a quiet side

street hardly wider than a lane, bordering a fine estate upon the outskirts of the town. Thus, they had plenty of fresh air and sunshine, and with no opposite neighbors to annoy them, they could overlook a trim lawn broad enough for a park; and catch, afar off, the white gleam of an artificial cascade tossing about in a grove of transplanted forest trees. Theirs was an estate in miniature; they had their patch of lawn, too; their flower-beds and vegetable garden; and their cottage, not much larger than a toy-house, was overgrown with woodbine and honeysuckle and a climbing rose that ran up to the eaves, parading a mass of blossoms there, well out of reach. The humming-birds knew the place and liked to poise about it. The swallows built in the front chimney that was never used, setting up a desperate clamor when one of their youngsters happened to tumble down into the little drawing-room. There, Mrs. Tom, as she was called, received her formal visitors with all the air of one who has argosies upon every sea in the atlas. Alas! Her only ship had been wrecked in port, and no diver could ever bring up to her its sunken treasures.

She had grown old before her time. Her hair was gray; her face was worn and wrinkled, yet it had a faded beauty in it still. She made a charming picture as she sat at night among her children, with her knitting in the hands that were rarely idle, and her eyes intent upon the page of some old novel, over which she would smile unconsciously

and drop her stitches. "Every inch a lady," was the unspoken platitude of Mr. Lisle, the Unitarian minister, whenever he came to call; and he called often, for she was constant in her attendance at his church, where she had a place of honor in her sister's pew. Jane took part in the choir; and the boys, Grip and Tom, sat in the gallery, in full view of their mother, who, by an occasional upward glance, took pains to assure herself that they were decently attentive to the sermon. Too often, it is to be feared, their interest in it was only apparent; for certain of Mr. Lisle's discourses had intricately woven threads that even his most devout hearers tried in vain to follow.

Tom's mother little knew the busy workings of her small boy's brain, as he perched behind the gallery-rail like a temple-haunting martlet. With what awe he eyed the Ten Commandments, hanging just over his head upon a huge tablet, which for a long time he believed had come straight from Sinai! With what anxiety he followed the long extemporaneous prayer forming itself laboriously, word by word, upon Mr. Lisle's lips! "It seems to tire him so," he thought. "What if he should break down before the end? And why does he have to look up, when he always shuts his eyes?" Then, later on in the service, Tom would count the rosettes in the cornice of the great, white interior; or watch with breathless interest some nodding deacon rouse himself with an effort, and look furtively about, deluded into the belief that his pec-

cadillo had escaped detection. "He ought to be kept after church," Tom reflected. But as Mr. Lisle never seemed to observe it, there was one proof more that to be a man and have a shiny bald head would settle things delightfully.

Tom often longed at church for some awful catastrophe, to interrupt the services and relieve the oppressive and monotonous decorum. But once, when a boy opposite knocked a hymn-book off the gallery-rail, very little came of it. One or two people smiled, to be sure, behind their palm-leaf fans, and the culprit turned a guilty crimson; but not a word of the sermon was lost; Mr. Lisle's voice did not even falter, and before long the fans were creaking harder than ever, and Tom was counting his rosettes again. He gave up, then and there, a scheme for strewing the pulpit floor with torpedoes. The risk would be so great and the result, when gained, so trifling! Church was church, evidently, and would go on doubtless, even though the earthquake and the waterspout of his geography were to threaten it. And he must remember the text, because his uncle would certainly ask him for it at dinner-time.

There went on in the same inexorable way a good many other things, which Tom would have liked to see interrupted. He enjoyed intensely, but he also suffered intensely; and the little ills of life were grave affairs to him. He was too young to realize that this world is a battle-field even to those who come off best in it; and that no man

ever grew old without thinking his own trials peculiarly exasperating.

School had begun again. One night, very early in September, Tom sat with his books before him open at the lesson for the next day. He had been sent into the dining-room remote from the distracting parish-gossip of Mr. Lisle, who was paying a visit. But Tom's thoughts wandered, nevertheless. Through the half-open door he could see his mother's face looking older and sadder than usual: he guessed why, when he caught the word "money" in their talk. Then he heard his own name and "college;" then his mother sighed, and said he was fond of the classics; after which, Mr. Lisle got up and closed the door.

That was enough. He could do nothing more with his arithmetic. He was indeed fond of the classics—even the Latin Grammar was a delight to him. Already he looked forward to college life, which the boys discussed continually. And here was the eternal money question, cropping up to cut short the fine career that he had planned. For so he could not help interpreting his mother's words. The possibility had never occurred to him before. He knit his brows resolutely over his work, but in vain; the awful problem of the greyhound and the hare would not come right. He pushed the book away and sat staring at it and thinking bitter things.

He heard Mr. Lisle go out; and then Jane came to the door.

"Tom, it is time to go to bed."

"I can't," said he.

"What do you mean? Why can't you?"

"My lesson is all wrong. This nasty arithmetic——." And he burst into tears.

Jane came in compassionately and helped him out. With a few gentle hints about manliness and a good many leading questions, she made him work out two or three of the impossible sums. He declared they were ridiculous, and she half admitted that this was true.

"There! we will leave the rest until the morning. Go in, and say good-night."

He departed quietly enough, but when she listened afterward, in the dark, at the foot of the stairs, she could hear him sobbing himself to sleep.

And in the night, awakened by the sound of his voice, she went to his room, and listened there again.

"College—" she heard him mutter; "can't I go?" And then, still dreaming, he put another anxious question: "How do you know he is alive?"

"Who, Tom?" she asked.

"My father," he answered without knowing it, and then turned over, to sleep more soundly.

She stole away, her own grief choking her.

"Poor boy!" she thought, "his real troubles have come already."

She might have added that they came with his first breath, as in all lives. But some of us, it is true, have a childhood and a youth, while Tom Sylvester got his full share of neither.

CHAPTER IV.

THE VALENTINE PLUCK

LATER on in that same autumn came one of those warm, still days, when Nature, having her preparations for the winter well in hand, seems to drop her work, and turn her back upon it. Then the wiseacres abuse the almanac, and say that the climate is changing; as if ours had not always been the zone of practical jokes, where even snowflakes in July should startle nobody; *à bon chat, bon rat*: your prudent meteorologist laughs with the seasons, and casts in his phenomena anywhere, without rhyme or reason.

It happened, this time, that Nature's holiday fell on Saturday, when the boys kept holiday, too. "Let's go out to my father's farm and make a dog-day of it," said Hal Rodney; "our society, you know—me, and you, and Pug—just we three." So each made his breakfast an unusually large one, and then begged all the luncheon he could carry; and the three met at one of the town pumps, with the day before them and the city all behind.

There had been a dry time, and they found the road very hot and very dusty; but a good-natured farmer coming up in his cart, gave them a lift

across the valley to the southern slope of one of the hills where the Rodney farm lay. The boys knew their ground, and took the longest way through the fields and over the stone walls to the barn, which stood well up the hill-side beyond the orchard, where the piles of red apples served, like cairns, to mark their resting-places. The pigs grunted and squealed at them from the sty, but the old barn overhead was silent as a church; there was one narrow aisle in it from door to door, and on either side the summer's hay had been solidly packed to the eaves.

The dim, sweet-scented space between the top of the haymows and the ridge-pole was the best play-ground in the world, and when the boys came climbing up to the cobwebbed rafters, the bloated old spiders knew what it meant and scuttled off in terror to their most secret strongholds. The turmoil began. What scampering and shouting, and flinging about of the hay; what a hip—hip—hurrah went up as the three joined hands and coasted down the side of the mow together, landing plump on the floor below! The noise made the echoes give sharp answers, as if they were indignant at being roused so rudely. Then Tom reluctantly agreed to try a burial alive, and was, indeed, half smothered before the others found it out; and Hal, heaping up a little mound in the middle of the floor-space, jumped straight at it from one of the great cross-beams, and dared them to follow. This they did; Pug with a rush,

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a whoop, and a sprawl that sent a cloud of dust in his wake; and Tom hanging back timidly till taunted into it, and leaping at last with a shiver and a gasp, to land sound in limb, but breathless and white as his own handkerchief.

After an hour's wear and tear, they were all somewhat short of breath, and sat down to recover it. Then the barn-door swung open with a crash, and a great shaft of sunlight shot up into the gloom.

Hal leaned over, looking down.

"Scrouger Morgan and his cousin," he whispered; "let's have 'em up."

"No," said Tom; "it's a secret society."

"Who's going to tell secrets?" asked Pug. "I vote for 'em."

"That settles it," said Hal. "Hello, Scrouger!"

The Morgan boy, whose length of limb and overbearing disposition gave him a double right to his nickname, was the son of a gentleman farmer living in the neighborhood. Hal admired the splendid lawlessness for which he was noted, and also respected his advanced age: he was older even than Pug, by a year or two.

This youth answered Hal with easy insolence. "Oh, it's you, is it?"

"Yes; come up."

"Can't," said the Scrouger, shortly. "We're smoking, me and Apparatus. You'd better come down."

Hal and Pug did so at once; and Tom followed,

much against his will, for he disliked both the Scrouger and the city cousin; the latter was always known as Apparatus, because of his scientific tastes, which he had a fondness for displaying priggishly.

They were smoking dried sweet-fern, in wrappers made from the leaves of a discarded copy-book. This ancient substitute for tobacco has a pleasant fragrance, and for a time all puffed away at it placidly in the shadow of the barn. The four country boys had, of course, many subjects in common, and their talk began to irritate Apparatus, who lived upon his own importance. He accordingly flung away his fern-leaves with a gesture of disgust, and pulling a huge cigar from his pocket, began to smoke it in scornful silence.

"Golly!" said Pug.

"Ain't it strong?" Hal asked.

"Not for me," replied Apparatus, contemptuously.

"Got another?" inquired the Scrouger.

"No. Feller only gave me one. Have a pull?"

Thereupon the cigar passed round the circle like a calumet, each of the boys taking his whiff or two and then handing it on to the next. When his turn came for the fourth time, Tom let it go by.

"Hold up," cried the Scrouger. "Fair play!"

"I don't care to smoke," said Tom, simply.

"That won't do," the other retorted. "You've got to—unless you're sick," he added, with a

sneer. "Look at him, fellers ; white as a sheet, already."

"I'm not," said Tom, hotly.

"White? Why, you're green as an artichoke," pursued the Scrouger. "And couldn't it smoke, then? Bye, Baby Bunting."

The boys laughed. Nagging is excellent sport, even though your best friend be the victim.

Tom started up, white now, indeed, but with rage.

"Take that!" he cried, striking the Scrouger full in the face. Then, alarmed at his own rashness, he bolted through an open window behind them into the old harness-room, now disused and full of broken farm-utensils. While Tom floundered there among the rakes, his tormentor had ample time to dart round to the door and confront him upon the threshold.

"Hold on," shouted the Scrouger. "I'm going to wallop you."

"Hooray—a fight!" came like a chorus from the window.

Tom saw that he was trapped, and so made up his mind to face the music. But he stood no chance ; he was knocked down once, and again ; one eye felt twice its natural size, his nose began to bleed ; he could not see his own blows fall, he felt a craven desire to cry ; and, yielding to this just as the others leaped down to interfere, he was so overcome with mortification, that, watching his opportunity, he dashed out of the door and ran as if

the devil were after him. The Scrouger shouted in derision, but Hal and Pug broke in upon his triumph with flashing eyes.

"What did you do that for?" demanded Hal.

"Why didn't you take a fellow of your size?"

"Little fool!" said the Scrouger. "Served him right."

"No, it didn't," cried Pug, pushing Hal aside. "What do you mean by that, I should like to know?"

"Just exactly what I say. And I'll lay you out in another second, if you want me to prove it."

Pug had been taught not to swear, but he swore then, precisely as if he had been grown up.

"Out of the way," he said to Hal, in a stage-whisper. "Let me polish him. You take care of Apparatus."

But, in his superior wisdom, that youth had taken care of himself at the first hint of a general scrimmage. Hal found only his flying figure, which he pursued in vain. When he came back, Pug was already master of the field. A moment later, the Scrouger found that he was wanted at home, and he withdrew with many threats of vengeance at some future time.

"Only wait!" he said.

"All right!" Pug returned, genially. "I'll wait. For further particulars inquire within."

"Hurt? No!" he continued, in answer to Hal's question. "But he'd have stamped on me, if I

had given him a chance. What an old mucker he is! Where's Tom?"

Tom was stretched out at full length under a wall in one of the pastures, where they had some difficulty in finding him. His grief had given place to gentle melancholy; his bruises were not serious, and it was probable that his black eye would not be so very black after all. This last hope came from Pug, who carried his consolation so far as to tell Tom that he had done splendidly in leaving the Scrouger sufficiently exhausted to make his defeat a very easy thing.

"He was awfully blown, you know, Tom," said he; "I never could have licked him, if you hadn't tuckered him out first."

"Did you lick him?" asked Tom, sitting up now and beginning to take an interest in things.

"Like thunder," Pug replied. "He wants us to wait, he says; well, I guess we can; don't you?"

"I am glad he's licked, any way," said Tom, thoughtfully.

Hal now thought it prudent to change the drift of the conversation.

"Hullo!" said he. "There's our old raft down in the pasture pond. Boys, I'll race you for first voyage on it."

So all three started off with a rush and a whirl, and went down the hill, howling like mad, over rail fences, through beds of rank clover almost tall enough and thick enough to trip them up. Tom

won the race, and his spirits regained their normal pitch. He rolled his trousers up to his knees, and proceeded to pole the clumsy raft across the pool, which looked like a mere watering-place for cows. But navigation there was slow and laborious, for the pole had a treacherous way of shooting down more than half its length into a mud bottom said to be unfathomable. The others walked round the pond to wait for Tom and laugh at him under a solitary elm that sprawled its huge roots along the farther shore. He landed at last after one or two hair-breadth escapes. "Anyone may do that who likes it," said he, "I've had enough. It's mighty hot work. I'd go in swimming if it wasn't for the leeches." And he wrenched several of these blood-thirsty parasites from his calves and ankles.

"Good idea!" cried Pug; "I tell you what, fellows, let's go on to Holton's Pond and have a swim there."

"It's too far," said Tom, promptly; "besides, we ain't allowed to go in at Holton's. It's prohibited."

"That's a good, big word," Pug retorted.

"Why is it prohibited?" asked Hal. "Who says so?"

Tom reminded them of a parental edict condemning the place as one of danger. But upon cross-examination it appeared that nothing had been heard of this at home for months; and Hal, who was something of a casuist, argued that the decree was therefore null and void; that they were

now old enough to take care of themselves, and growing older every second; above all, that no one need ever know. And Tom's timid objections were soon overruled.

"Then that's all settled," continued Hal, looking at his watch. "After luncheon, Holton's it is!"

"It's only eleven o'clock," said Pug; "luncheon now?"

"This is the best place and the best time to have it," Hal asserted; "the things will spoil if we carry 'em round all day. Majority rules—go by it. Tom agrees with me."

This Tom did with emphasis; and Pug yielded his point gracefully, having been moved to make it only by his unflagging spirit of contradiction; he developed, too, at short notice, an appetite that was a wonder in its way.

When the last crumb was eaten, there arose another small argument concerning the shortest cut to Holton's. Even as the crow flies it lay a long mile off, and the obstacles to a direct course were many. Pug having given in once with humility, now carried all before him his way, which, if the shortest, was also the swampiest, as Hal took occasion to note while they jumped from tussock to tussock through a bog, that recorded its blackness in great splashes upon them at intervals. But the dust of the road, when they took to it again, soon did away with that.

It was almost noon when they reached the shore of the pond, which is one of those secluded sheets

of water so common in New England ; sufficiently wide and deep to pass for a lake in some less favored countries, and with wooded banks needing only a legend to make them perfect ; where these are highest and the pond narrowest and deepest, an enterprising railway company has put up a single granite arch of fine proportions, old enough to have acquired gray picturesqueness ; noted, too, for a triple echo of which the boys were very fond. Here, accordingly, they came, and seated upon one of the lower blocks in the bridge abutment, they shouted and jeered at the topmost stones of the arch, many feet above them, until their throats ached, and the echo began to show signs of fatigue.

"How still it is !" said Hal, after a short silence. "I should think people would build houses here, shouldn't you ? "

"There is a house," Pug replied.

"Oh, Farmer Holton's ; but that's a good way off."

"And there's the mill, too, close by," said Tom. "Grip's mill."

"My father's mill, you mean," returned Hal, throwing a handful of pebbles into the water. "That's so, I forgot that. We can hear it, if we can't see it. There goes the whistle now."

"It sounds like a big June-bug," said Pug. "The men will have dinner now. We shall get home too late for ours ; and our luncheon is all gone."

"We came here to swim," Hal answered, loftily. "Let's go in. This is a bully place."

"But it's awfully deep here," Tom objected.

"Nonsense. Where are your eyes? I can see bottom clear way out—as far as that," and he threw another stone at the imaginary line he had indicated.

Pug was already disrobing.

"Come on," said he; "these blocks are a regular flight of stairs. I'll bet ten cents I jump from a higher one than either of you."

Tom, who was but just learning to swim, refused to pick up this gauntlet. Nevertheless, he followed the others at first, making the jumps, step by step, a little higher each time. The water in that spot was really shallow and there seemed to be no danger. When the height became too great for him, he paddled about below, watching Hal and Pug, who went on with the game, until at a point about a quarter of the way up the huge stone staircase they wavered, then looked at each other and laughed.

"Call it a draw," said Hal.

"I don't want to stick fast in the mud—that's all," replied Pug. "It's so shallow down there."

"There's one of the workmen looking at us," Hal returned, pointing at the bridge overhead. "Give us your hand—we'll go this one, and then the bet's off."

So, after one or two false starts, they jumped together hand in hand, but parting company before

they reached the water. A moment after they emerged with a good deal of noise and splashing, and in boy fashion, both glanced up to see if their great feat had been duly appreciated by the silent spectator.

Two others had joined him, and the little group of men leaned over the railing of the bridge and watched the swimmers curiously.

"It's deeper here," cried Hal, still inclined to show off. "See! I'm treading water."

Pug, in the same spirit, immediately proposed that they should swim across the pond.

"A race," said he. "I stump you. One—two—three!" And they were off. Both could swim reasonably well; there was little doubt that they would make the other shore easily, in good condition.

But Tom, who had wandered away for some distance, now lost his head completely. Here was his chance, he thought, to prove himself an expert. It was a long pull to the point for which they were heading; a longer pull than theirs. But he would try it. The pond was shallow, after all. He could turn back at any moment if his strength should fail him. He exerted it all now in two or three tremendous strokes. That was a splendid start. He felt sure that he could beat them.

Suddenly, the water grew very cold. There was a current here, too, that seemed to hold him back. He could make but little headway. Yet he must be half across the pond, now. He put down his

foot to feel for the bottom, without finding it. He tried again ; and this time he went under.

He rose, and saw the boys' heads nearing the farther shore. He shouted, but they did not hear. His mouth filled with water ; he went down, down. Then the great blue mystery that he called heaven shone once more above him ; and all the breath left to him went out in a fearful cry that fell back gurgling in his ears. Then he saw only bubbles.

Pug, scrambling up the bank, turned in triumph just in time to catch a glimpse of the distorted face and struggling hands. "Tom—Tom !" he shouted, and dashing back into the water, he swam out with all his strength. And Hal, as he landed, saw the ripple widening round the place in great circles, as if a stone had fallen there. And he understood, but for the moment could only stare without even so much as a cry for help. He heard a noise overhead, and looking up, he saw the figure of a man erect upon the railing of the bridge ; in another second it shot down straight as an arrow and struck the water. A great splash went up ; the man rose, made a dive, brought Tom to the surface ; and before long the boy was lying white and silent on the grass at Hal's feet, with his brother Grip, in clinging wet clothes, hard at work upon him.

In a few moments Tom opened his eyes.

"Oh, Grip! Grip!" he cried, clutching his brother's arm in unreasoning terror ; and he was off again.

"Now, boys, rub for your lives," said Grip ;
"we'll bring him round in no time."

One of the men who had joined them produced a flat bottle of whiskey, another brought Tom's clothes from the opposite shore ; and he was soon sitting up as well as anybody.

"Where did you come from, Grip ?" he asked.

"Never mind about that ; get home as fast as you can. And I wouldn't say anything there about this." And Grip, at the sound of the whistle, stalked away to his loom, wringing the water from his wet shirt as he went.

"Did he jump from the bridge ?" Tom inquired.

"Yes," said one of the hands, as they moved off.

"A good job, too, that he was there !"

Tom looked up, and shivered. It had been a frightful jump ; to him it seemed incredible.

Pug and Hal, who had gone round to dress, came back and they went home on the dead run. Tom followed his brother's advice and did not speak of the adventure. But Jane heard about it in the street, and nothing else was discussed at the supper-table. Grip made light of the matter, and Tom escaped further punishment for disobeying orders. It was all right now, but he must never go to Holton's again.

"Did you notice that queer mark under Tom's eye ?" his mother asked, when Tom had left the table.

"Yes," said Jane, "it looked like a bruise."

"It must have been discolored by the water,"

said Mrs. Sylvester, gliding away into the drawing-room.

"For heaven's sake, Jane," cried Grip, "don't you know a black eye when you see one? I wonder where Tom got it."

"No matter," she answered; "if you would only let Tom alone—" she stopped at a change in her brother's expression. "No, Grip, I didn't quite mean that."

"All right, Jane. I forgive you," he said, swinging off. "Tom must get used to black eyes in this world, mustn't he?"

CHAPTER V.

THE CAVALIER'S VOW

ALL boys delight in the profane pageantry of the theatre; it is an inborn passion, as natural to them as a cat's love of fish. And, to make another comparison nearer home, boys, too, are imitative as monkeys. With them the impression leads directly to the action, and is promptly merged in it. You took your youthful statesman last night to the circus; to-day you find him tied up in a bow-knot on the nursery hearth-rug, privately plotting to apprentice himself to a contortionist. This resolve, if you discover it, does not alarm you; for you know that to-morrow some fresh impression will occur to make him change it. He must gain his experience if he is ever to become a senator; take him to see "Julius Cæsar," and for a few hours he will long to be a noble Roman.

Now, as has been already stated, there was a theatre in Worthingham; a tawdry little place, oftener closed than not, with shabby scenery almost mediæval in its rude simplicity, but still a theatre; and its doors were temple doors to Tom Sylvester. When some strolling company hung out its streamers there for a day or two, he would study them

until he knew all the names by heart ; and if he could possibly get together the small sum needed for admission to the gallery at the afternoon performance, he was sure to go. The family could ill afford to be theatrically minded. But one night, as a reward of merit, Jane took him to see a famous actor in "Hamlet." The effect upon his wondering senses was profound ; for days afterward he lived in Elsinore. How he longed to be grown up, that he might haunt the play like two elderly spinsters of his acquaintance, who were said never to miss a night. He had looked for the India shawls of these privileged persons the moment the lights were turned up. The good souls who carried their worship regularly into the front row must lead an ideal existence second only to that of the idol himself.

For if to see a play was a pleasure all too fleeting, what would it be continuously to act in one ? To breathe incessantly that strange atmosphere of the inner precincts, the *arcana* upon which daylight never shone ? What rare whiffs of mustiness came out by the stage-door when he hovered patiently around it longing to go in ! What glimpses of ropes and pulleys and occult paraphernalia were his ! And look ! That muffled figure, brushing by him to her carriage, was the leading lady whom five minutes earlier he had seen die inch by inch, in white satin, of a broken heart. And, just then, the doorkeeper noticing his wistful look, passed him in to stand for one important

moment upon the stage, bare now as an empty barn ; to get a new effect of cavernous blackness above and beyond it ; to stare and wonder and go away still longing to be an actor. A theatre without lights—well-worn archetype of the gloom that waits on all the glories of the world ; to a man, yes ; but to a boy it only suggests that the world is even more mysterious and fascinating than he dreamed.

It was after his imagination had thus been let loose for an instant in the dark, that Tom conceived the idea of writing a play in which he, first, and the boys afterward, should act. They had often learned dialogue and spouted it ; now they must do something better—a tragedy, in which, however the other parts might be distributed, he would play the villain, and at the end, after a fearful combat, die of a sword - thrust in lingering agonies.

But the name ? Of course, no line could be written without deciding upon that ; and to find a good one was so hard that Tom, after lying awake half the night, gave it up in despair, and appealed for help to Pug Stanhope, who proved to be in a sympathetic mood. He was ready to lend himself heartily to the scheme, provided that the play could be given in his father's garret, and that he could be allowed to play the hero. But when Tom had graciously conceded these privileges, there still remained the vexed question of a name for the unwritten tragedy. After much consideration this

was at last invented. They were to call the play "The Cavalier's Vow."

"But what can he vow?" Tom asked, when this had been definitely settled.

"Oh, you can think up something," said Pug, cheerily. "I'm the cavalier; my name's Francisco; and I'll vow anything you like."

"There's another thing, Pug. We've got to have a heroine, if there's going to be a hero. How about girls?"

"Oh, we can't have any girls."

"Do you think Hal would dress up for it?"

"He'll have to," replied Pug, decisively, "if we say so. Get him a good name and he'll be all right. What's yours going to be?"

"Count Marco is mine," said Tom. "Bianca might do for Hal; that's a nice name."

"Call him Bianca, Duchess of Ravenna—then he'll play the part. He'll like that, I know."

"All right: I'll tell him."

So Tom went off to write the play, on the way home breaking the news to Hal, who accepted his part without a murmur. And when, a few days later, the complete work had been read to an admiring circle of prospective actors, all agreed in pronouncing it a masterpiece.

The Stanhope garret was a wide, airy place finished in white plaster, and having at one end a recess with a cobwebbed lunette that admitted a somewhat scant allowance of daylight. On either side, a small door led to empty darkness close

under the rafters. The alcove, when Pug had curtailed it, made an admirable stage; the doors stood ready for exits and entrances; the very light streamed down, as if with theatrical intention. And though they had no scenery, that mattered little; for Pug prepared two large placards upon which all the business of the play was clearly indicated; with these, with their costumes and their burnt-cork eyebrows and mustaches, it must be a dull imagination that could not set up a forest or a castle rampart to suit itself.

There were two rehearsals that went off most amiably. All the boys except Pug, impressed by Tom's surpassing skill at stage-craft, forbore to object or to complain; and even Pug, himself, had only to be reminded that he was playing the hero to become a pattern of good nature. Tom had caught the spirit of melodrama and carried it beyond absurdity; his staginess was absolutely appalling; but it thrilled his fellow-actors, and when he died for the first time, Pug felt that his own laurels were in danger.

"I want to do that," he said; "why can't I die, too?"

There was a general shout.

"Of course you can't," cried Tom, reviving hastily. "You've got to stand there embracing the Duchess, while the curtain falls."

"Let me be wounded, then," said Pug. "That will make the combat more exciting. They'll think I'm going to die—but I won't—I'll only stagger, and go on."

And after some dispute, this point was granted him.

At the second rehearsal Tom had an adventure that threatened to give them a scene not down in the bills. Upon making one of his fierce exits into the dark roof-space, the Black Hole, as the boys called it, he heard something rustle off before him upon light feet. "The cat!" he thought, brandishing his sword, and following the sound quite away from the door, until all became very dark indeed. Then he stretched out his hand, and touched two smaller ones, clasped imploringly.

"Don't, Tom," said the voice of Clover Stanhope. "Don't! It's only me!"

"Clover! Why, what are you doing here?"

"Hush!" she whispered. "Don't let Pug know. I came to see the play, and I think it's splendid."

"Spy!" hissed Tom, still in his part, obdurate, unmoved.

"Oh, Tom—please. I haven't seen a thing, and it's horrid and spidery here. I wish I hadn't come, and if you tell, they will never let me see the performance."

Then faint sobs, by which, or by the awful consequence of discovery she predicted, Tom was touched.

"I won't tell," said he. "Just keep dark, that's all." And, indeed, it was impossible for her to keep otherwise. Then he stalked away magnificently, as if he had done a truly heroic thing; thus

breaking his compact with the secret society, but making Clover his friend for life.

With what inexpressible rapture she climbed the garret stairs on the Saturday afternoon when the play was really given, for the first and last time in the world's history! All the neighbors and the neighbors' children were there; the room was nearly full. Now and then a pair of eyes peered at them from behind the red curtain which swayed to and fro in a stimulating manner, and finally went up jerkily, as curtains will that are not used to it. Amid great applause, her brother Pug was disclosed in a picturesque attitude suitable to the Cavalier, Francisco. He wore a robe of orange cambric, a black cap with a red plume, a sword, a pointed mustache, and shoes with silver buckles. He was on the eve of a long journey and overcome with grief at the thought of parting from his dear Bianca, the Duchess of Ravenna, who now appeared in a white train over an enormous hoop (for hoops were then worn in Worthingham), with a feather fan at her girdle. She seemed to suffer from absence of mind, for while her lips declaimed words of love, her attention was obviously absorbed by her gown, which proved hard to manage. The constant play of her fan was perhaps due to the climate of Ravenna, an ancient city of Southern Europe. This passive creature was committed by her lover to the care of her faithful retainer, Gonsalvo, who then revealed the fact of a mad and hopeless passion for her cherished by the wicked Count Marco,

whose heart was "inflexible as marble." But Francisco laughed him to scorn, and pledging Bianca his eternal devotion, bade the stars shine out and witness it. This was his vow; and having pronounced it, he departed; while Bianca sat down—with some difficulty, for the hoop now asserted itself—and was at last moved to tears. Even a packet of Francisco's letters failed to console her; she laid them away in a cabinet, and was then borne off fainting in Gonsalvo's arms. This left the stage clear for Count Marco's first entrance, which was a stealthy one. His eyes rolled fearfully; his eyebrows bristled; his mustache was of the fiercest cut; about his head was bound a red scarf with a black, nodding feather like the plume upon a hearse; he spoke hoarsely behind the folds of a dark cloak, and moved in an atmosphere of crime. "A cabinet—and locked!" he muttered, and then calmly opened it, instead of prying its doors apart with his dagger as he meant to do. At this even Clover laughed, where she should have shuddered. But Marco soon recovered himself; he read the letters, he stuck them in his belt; he drew his dagger now, and flourished it. "He loves her—it is true—but I will thwart them to the death!" And upon this threat the curtain fell.

For a while his horrid schemes worked wonderfully. By means of forged missives he poisoned the mind of the absent cavalier and forced him to renounce Bianca, the beloved. And when the good Gonsalvo had been dispatched to tell Fran-

cisco she was ever true, Count Marco skulked in the underbrush of a glade near the Lake of Como, and murdered the trusty messenger in cold blood, with mockery and exultation. But, not content with this, the fiendish Marco, who seemed to have a passion for breaking and entering, burst open the family vault at night to drag Gonsalvo's body forth to be the prey of vultures. This scene, the last one of the play, was most impressive. Its triumph would have been complete, if the pale corse of Gonsalvo, lying there in state, had not been taken with a sneezing fit. His beard tickled him, he afterward explained; and again the audience gave way to merriment. But now the tomb doors were wrenched apart with a horrid clang ("My best japanned waiter—it will be ruined!" said Mrs. Stanhope, in an audible aside), and Marco appeared upon the threshold. He shook his fist at the dead retainer. "The birds of night shall revel round his heart! But stay! I hear the clatter of horses' hoofs. I know the sound—'tis he, my hated rival!" And, in fact, it was. Francisco had spurred his frothing steed since sundown. The iron doors fell back with another and a louder crash (movement on the part of Mrs. Stanhope), and the cavalier challenged Marco to mortal combat. The swords flashed; the deadly struggle, prolonged and complicated by the unexplained entrance of Bianca in an unrestraint of terror so far as her hoop would permit, could have but one ending; virtue was bound to win, and it did. Marco

expired, writhing, with imprecations on his lips ; while Francisco clasped the Duchess of Ravenna, still shrieking and hysterical, to his panting breast.

Pleasures fly doubly fast when they fly away from children. This one, now, had hardly lasted half an afternoon, and already it was over. Tom, walking home with his manuscript under his arm, could not quite comprehend why he felt so sad about it. Perhaps actors were always sad after tragedy. The play had certainly gone off well. How they had applauded him when he came out at the end ! And Clover had told him privately that it was magnificent. His own acting must have been admirable ; he would make himself a famous star some day, with heaps of money, horses and carriages, real swords, and jewels and things. If it only did not take men so terribly long to grow ! Just then he heard voices, and, looking up, found he was overtaking the two spinsters of the India shawls, whom he had last seen in a corner of the garret. Here they were walking home from his play and discussing it, for he caught the words of the title. If he could only know more ! Why not cut across Mr. Lisle's garden, turn the corner before them, and, following the line of the hedge, overhear the talk without their suspecting it ? Listeners never learn good of themselves, Jane said sometimes. That might be true, and it might not. He would see.

The footsteps came on very slowly. Yes, they

really were talking about it. One quoted a line ; then both stood still and laughed.

"So very comical, my dear. Such utter nonsense ! "

"And that Sylvester boy. Where could he have picked up such notions of acting ? A monster of conceit ! And I'm sure he's a bad boy, too. Depend upon it, my dear, he is his father over again."

So Jane was right, after all. Tom did not follow to hear them out. He flung himself down upon the grass and hid his face. As for the play, that was torn to atoms the moment he got home ; and he did not try his hand at another. That barbed moment left a wound which was long in healing ; later on, its remembrance may have cost the stage an actor, whom it perhaps deprived of an intoxicating triumph, perhaps saved from the pangs of humiliation.

CHAPTER VI.

LOVE'S DAY DAWNS

FOR some time after that, life went plodding along with the easy, monotonous gait of a treadmill horse. Tom worked very hard at school, where he did the things he liked so well as to keep a high rank in his class, once or twice even sitting at the head of it. This, too, in spite of the awful mathematics, still unconquerable, though no longer the source of tears. In languages, living and dead, he was, as Hal Rodney profanely put it, "a holy terror." Why, old Larkin had but to open his Latin grammar, choose any page by its number, and Tom could repeat it all, down to the last fine-print exception. And in French, too, how he did roll the *r* and bring out the *u*, every time. And Froggy Coutard, the master, lent him story books sometimes, not to study, but to read at home with a dictionary, because he liked it. Oh, yes, Tom was a caution!

But the two ends of the arithmetical problems would never meet—fortunately, perhaps, or the boy might have grown wiser in his own conceit than in the lore of the ages. He had, however,

another balance-wheel in the fear that his years of study were already numbered; that he should some day, with little warning, be swept off into outer darkness, while Hal and Pug went climbing up the ladder of learning through the long grades of the university to the glorious upper air of letters beyond it. Perhaps, if he studied hard and made his high aims apparent, the course of things might turn his way. One fact was obvious enough: the schoolmaster would be on his side, whenever the decisive moment came. Old Larkin was human and—unconsciously, of course—made certain pupils his favorites. Tom had long been one of them. He was fifteen now, in that trying time of man's growth when he is neither hay nor grass, agriculturally speaking; when his elders insist upon talking down to him, while he stands often silent and abashed, making mental comparisons of a cynical nature, confident that he can never grow much older—in his feelings. He had discovered how far his native city was from the centre of the universe in a memorable journey to New York and Niagara, taken in company with his uncle Mark; during which vacation-time that amiable relative, devoting himself body and soul to the boy's pleasure, had done his best to be a boy again—and had nearly killed himself at it, as he told his wife in confidence afterward. Tom, on the contrary, returned refreshed and exhilarated, to plunge deeper into books from which he continued to get all his strongest impressions. His glimpse of the world's pos-

sibilities gave him an insatiable longing to know them better. He must be a traveller—a real one. He read Victor Hugo and Dumas *père* with a deeper interest now, and also with a strong presentiment, which he indulged and petted, that he should know Paris well one of these days—perhaps to meet there the father whom he had never known, but who had for him a romantic interest on account of those early misdeeds which Tom still but half surmised. No one yet had volunteered the full information he felt should be his ; but he dreaded the pain of asking for it.

Often, at the old Sylvester house, he would go up quietly, alone, to the rooms which his absent cousin, Marmaduke, occupied so rarely that Tom could remember seeing him only once. But there were countless likenesses to recall him ; and the boy imagined that he knew him well. At all events, he could study his cousin's tastes in the curious objects that filled the silent chambers ; could try on French *sabots* and draw a Toledo blade ; or, poring over some dusty guide-book, find a leaf turned down with queer notes of the day's journey or the night's lodging scribbled upon it. Amid these surroundings Tom's imagination travelled far and wide in no time. He saw himself, a grown man, returning to civilization from a thousand perils ; his skin bronzed, his hair touched with silver ; the very pattern of all that a famous explorer, discoverer and tiger-slayer, over-burdened with honors and rolling in riches, should be. It did not appear

precisely how he was to come by this vast wealth, but that was a mere detail. He would control it wisely in his Monte Cristo château on the Loire—not in Spain. France should be his home, and he would marry a French wife with wonderful hair and eyes. Then— Oh, rainbow bubbles—made at a breath, at a breath to be destroyed! With a clay pipe, a little soap and water, every boy has blown them. Who cannot turn back his poor life's mildewed pages, and find recorded on the golden one of inexperience dreams more extravagant than these?

It will be perceived that Tom was beginning to "take notice," as the simple nursery phrase puts it. The mystic compact had become to all the boys a dead letter—they permitted girls to live; more than that, they discussed the question of marriage in a highly poetic style, oftener than their elders imagined, at greater length than they ever did in after life. Of course it was the only perfect state; they would all marry some day—in fact, whenever the right one came along. And the right one would have such and such divine qualities—like, for instance, So-and-so. It is a great mercy that popular prejudice in our part of the world frowns upon the youth who leaps without looking into matrimony, before he has attained the ripe age of twenty-one. Otherwise, the number of ill-considered marriages, already not inconsiderable, would surely be increased a hundredfold.

They were deep in the *Æneid* now, and Tom

often read over the hundred lines or so of evening lesson in Hal's room. The task seemed lighter when there were two to perform it, though this division of labor was really all to Hal's advantage; for he hung back wofully at the hard places, and Tom was always responsible for the construction that bridged them over. Tom's attention became drawn to this fact occasionally, and one autumn night, just before the Thanksgiving recess, when there was snow in the air and a prospect of skating not far distant, it seemed to him that his friend's wits were clogging up like a wet snowball into more of a dead weight than ever.

"Hang it, Hal," said he, "I'm doing all the work. Look alive, now, with that lexicon. You act like a man in love."

The last words had the subtle odor of incense in them. It is not to hurt a boy's feelings, to charge him with having arrived at man's estate, and in the same breath with having yielded to the most fatal of the passions.

"Don't be a fool," returned Hal, visibly moved. "There's not a woman in this town that 'll ever catch me running after her."

"Just wait; you haven't seen all the girls yet that are here—or going to be."

"What do you mean?"

"I know something, that's all," replied Tom, oracularly. "No matter about it now. We'll go on with the lesson: '*Nec te noster amor*——'"

"Shut up!" said Hal, suiting his action to his

word with the heavy dictionary covers. "I won't study another atom this night. What's the use? Old Larkin will skip us to-morrow. I feel it in my bones."

"But if he shouldn't——"

"Hang it! never mind. You can finish in the morning before breakfast, if you must. Let's talk. What is it you know?"

"Nothing so very much. She's a beauty, though, if her picture is anything like her."

"Whose picture? Where did you see it? When?"

"To-night, at Mr. Lisle's," Tom explained. "I stopped there with a message, and the photograph was on the table. I asked who it was."

"And what did he tell you?"

"His New York niece he called her; she's coming on to pass Thanksgiving week. Hannah is her name."

"Don't like it," said Hal, promptly. "Plain Hannah!—just as if she were a washerwoman."

"She isn't plain Hannah. She can give Cora Merrifield points on looks, and everybody calls Cora the prettiest girl in town."

"Hannah!" repeated Hal, scornfully. "Hannah what?"

"Hannah Lisle, of course."

"Hum! I advise her to keep that combination. She can't better it. Hannah Rodney wouldn't sound so well—or Hannah Sylvester."

"Oh, you may laugh. Just wait, that's all."

"Tell us what she is like, then."

And while Tom proceeded to describe her features minutely, Hal worked them up into a pencil-sketch on the fly-leaf of his Virgil.

"There you are," said he ; " portrait of the bride, by the bridegroom."

"As like the real article as a little yellow dog," Tom returned. "How she just would show up in white satin, though! Good-night." And the question was laid upon the table.

The next morning, at the Latin recitation, Tom was called up to translate his dozen lines quickly and well. As he sat down a wisp of paper was put into his hand ; and, examining it secretly, he read, in Hal's familiar character, the following satirical announcement :

SYLVESTER—LISLE. At the residence of the bride's uncle, Thomas Sylvester to Hannah Lisle of New York, niece of the officiating clergyman. [No cards, no cake, no flowers.]

Old Larkin often saw, and feigned not to see. He had caught the gleam of this message in its course from hand to hand, and had marked it down ; but he merely amused himself now in tracing it back to its source. The process was not difficult. Hal's eyes dilated with mischief ; he was fair game, easily retrieved.

"Rodney, it is time we heard from you. Go on, where Sylvester left off."

Hal, partially restored to consciousness, plunged recklessly into the passage which Tom had just interpreted.

"We know all about that, thank you," said Mr. Larkin. "Tell me something new, Rodney. Begin farther on, with '*Nec te noster amor.*'"

At this Hal changed color, and, floundering hopelessly, made incoherent nonsense of Dido's passionate appeal. Mr. Larkin grimly let him go on, until, in the middle of a line, when no verb seemed to be in sight, there was a dead pause.

"Bravo!" said the master, with tormenting composure. "After school you may turn some English into Latin, and see if you can do as well. The note you favored us with just now will answer our purpose, if Sylvester will hand it to me."

The school received this with suppressed hilarity, but gained, upon the whole, that impression of omniscience which Mr. Larkin considered to be the essence of good discipline. And no more notes were written that day.

"What did he say about it?" Tom asked of Hal, when they met in the evening over the lexicon.

"He said Miss Lisle might do worse than take you, when the time came; and that a fellow who couldn't read six lines of Virgil would never be married, most likely. But I'm going in for her, so just look out. You might have swallowed that note, I think; I'd have done it."

Heralded by these premonitory flutterings of the heart, the day of conquest came for the imperious little beauty, who proved to be in no wise inferior to her likeness for which Tom had supplied the glowing colors. She was a brunette, with eyes of the blackest and cheeks of the rosiest, slender and graceful in figure. From her father she inherited quickness and lightness of wit and a cheerful disposition; from her mother, many captivating airs and graces, with a faultless taste in dress; and from both, her beauty. Though, in fact, she was but just sixteen, she seemed already grown up. Her general brilliancy of style was heightened by an inclination to laugh upon all occasions. She could not even take one of her uncle's sermons seriously. This naturally worried Mr. Lisle a little; for, as one of the old school (how quickly schools grow old nowadays!), he thought there were times when the bearing and demeanor should incline to lugubriousness. But his younger brother, Hannah's father, thought differently. He was a retired New York merchant of studious tastes, accustomed to say that he had money enough to let his one chicken have a good time if she wanted it; she seemed in a fair way of getting just that; she would marry some day, he supposed, and spoil everything. He might have added that in the meantime her father and mother would do their best to spoil her. But when the elder brother hinted at this and gravely shook his head, he laughed, precisely as Hannah would have done.

In a week Hannah knew all the Worthingham boys who were worth knowing, and she conducted herself so discreetly that each in turn thought himself her dearest friend ; each, too, had his own way of expressing satisfaction at this surmise. Pug, with a sly look, admitted that she was "nice, but nothing extra." Hal feigned lofty indifference, and called her flighty, all the while carrying concealed in his watch-case the petal of a rose she had given him. Tom, on the contrary, openly avowed his admiration, posing as her adorer, with a conscious smile. He was secretly jealous of Pug, who saw Hannah oftener than he did, owing to an undying friendship that had sprung up between her and Clover Stanhope. For the girls liked Hannah, too ; and even Cora Merrifield, the prettiest of them all, had been heard to say that Miss Lisle was certainly handsome, though not in the way which she especially fancied.

Graciously, as a princess might welcome the humble ambassadors from a distant province, Miss Lisle accepted all the awkward advances that were made to her. The boys could wear her colors, beg a flower now and then, and get it ; obtain her portrait even, upon condition that this was never to be shown. She would walk, skate, dance in their company ; or quarrel with them, for the pleasure of reconciliation. But they were boys, not men ; mere bystanders, gathered along the highway to watch her royal progress ; throwing up their caps, while she smiled to right and left, but kept her

eyes fixed upon the far-off horizon, over which the true prince would ride down to meet her. He would be a man, grave and strong and wise ; twice her age, perhaps. She was sure of knowing him, when he came, at the first glance ; but in spite of that, he should not win his prize too easily ; although a man and a prince, he should turn boy and subject for her sake, and toss his cap up with the others. Meanwhile, it was pleasant to be young and adorable, to wait for him, and wonder. After all, if he never came, what did it matter?

So when the visit drew to an end with her statement that she had never had so good a time in her life—and this, with all due allowance for girlish extravagance of sentiment, was not improbable—she found a group of admirers waiting at the station to bid her hail and farewell. From her seat in the train she beamed down upon them all, playfully distinguishing some one above the rest by a disjointed phrase incomprehensible to the others ; and neutralizing the effect by a glance in the opposite direction. As the moment of departure came nearer, she grew merrier and more radiant ; but had any older head been watching her, this very exhilaration would have betrayed a certain shade of anxiety or disappointment, that she was determined to disguise. The bell struck ; there were but two minutes more ; and just then Tom's brother Grip loomed up in the crowd. The boys, in deference to him, drew back. He pressed for-

ward to the window ; she leaned out of it, to give him her hand ; while they talked the train moved and he followed it, quickening his pace, to the very end of the platform. A wave of the hand, and she was gone. Her last smile, vanishing in the sunlight, was for him, not for them. And the boys separated in silence, longing more than ever to be men.

A few nights later, at a game of blind-man's-buff, Hal, wearing Tom's coat, found in it a photograph of Miss Lisle. He held this up with a shout, forgetting that he had lost control of his own pocket, and that it lay in Tom's power to make a similar disclosure. Prompt retaliation followed. Whereupon the assembly came to order, and all the pockets there present were turned inside out. The result was a revelation. Likenesses of Hannah to the number of five had been distributed, each with its own solemn injunction of secrecy. Judgment succeeded, and Hannah Lisle was pronounced a fraud by a large majority. But Tom stoutly defended her, maintaining that she cared for him alone, and that he could prove it. Driven to the wall, he at length produced a lock of hair said to be hers. Nobody could match this, or dispute the implied tenderness of such a gift. Tom was triumphant, and he received, with a quiet smile, the derisive congratulations of the company. " But how about Grip ? " some one asked. Tom replied that Grip didn't count. This obvious begging of the question passed for argument in de-

fault of further evidence, and the lock of hair and the laugh still remained with Tom.

Boys have taken a long step forward when, with comic earnestness, they begin to turn one another into lovers. This well-known phase precedes by a year or two the sprouting of the down upon the upper lip, and is the first definite sign that life has ceased to be a play-ground. If none really believes that the name now linked with his in jest is ever to be exchanged for it, there is pleasure, nevertheless, in admitting to one's self that important possibility, and in calculating the consequences. At this age sentiment is pardonable, and the writing of verses is tolerated. Even Hal Rodney, who was nothing if not practical, had once tried his hand at a sonnet, with much rack-ing of the brain to supply the rhyme, and much counting of the finger-tips to restrain the metre. He was not overcome with surprise, therefore, when Tom one day addressed to him the following acrostic :

TO H. RODNEY, ESQ.

H er eye is the color of the raven,
A nd her cheek has the rose's bright hue ;
N ot darker is ink than her beautiful locks,
N ever think that she'll give one to you !
A h ! if you would seek this fair one to discover,
H er name stands before you, engraved by her lover !

Hal thought this a wonderful poem, and he threatened to send it off to Hannah by the next

post. But he was strictly forbidden to show it at all, on pain of forfeiting Tom's confidence forever. So the paper turned yellow in a corner of Hal's writing-desk, and the verses had nearly faded out of it, when Hannah read them for the first time, long afterward. But the small flame of sentiment flickered on, to bring a conscious flush into Tom's face whenever her name was mentioned. A first love is always tinged deeply with pretence; it is the mild disease which childhood exaggerates into a fearful illness, knowing all the while that its danger was inappreciable; it is the playful fencing-bout with foils well bated—not the mortal combat. But even in playing with life our experience grows with us imperceptibly, and we take to heart, day by day, without knowing it, lessons of patience and courage for the real contest that is to come.

Part 11.

THE CUP OF ALTERATION

CHAPTER I.

EVERYTHING GONE WRONG

THE false housewife Fortune often turns her wheel too slowly with a very mockery of deliberation ; yet, sometimes, her appalling swiftness threatens to break every spoke of it, and she ravel's all her skeins and snaps their threads remorselessly. In this more petulant method she dealt with Worthingham skeins in general, and the Sylvester thread in particular, during the next five years of Tom's life. They were years of sorrow and change and disappointment. Tormenting cares pursued and overtook him ; but he had the strength of youth to beat them back ; they did their worst, and did no more than to make a man of him before his time.

His uncle's death came first. One day good old Mark Sylvester took his after-dinner siesta, and never woke from it. He had been dead for some hours when they found him there, at rest, with his handkerchief spread over the tranquil, smiling face. Half the town followed to his grave this kind friend and honored citizen, in whose heart were no dark corners, whose worst fault was generosity. His property, summed up, fell far below the popular

estimate ; his widow was left in circumstances that were barely comfortable ; she was forced into a narrower scale of living, a smaller establishment ; never again to look upon the old place, when other hands had altered and improved it. For the luxury of giving, Mark Sylvester had literally robbed himself.

Then Tom's mother fell sick of a lingering disease, and finally died after months of suffering, which she bore with a gentleness it broke one's heart to see. And Jane, upon whom so much depended, worried and careworn with it all, had a long illness from which she rallied but slowly. Grip held his own gloriously in good health and spirits, and did his best to keep the wolf from the door. He had worked his way on to an important place in the mill ; his prospects, every one said, were excellent, but his immediate resources were scanty ; and, in spite of strict economy, bills would run up, debts would accumulate. The insatiate monster that preys upon the poor man's purse has more heads than Hydra.

Tom bore these trials reasonably well, until one day came his inevitable hour of sacrifice, calling for more courage than he found to meet it. The last year of school-life was just about beginning ; he had passed the morning in collecting his books, and, joining Hal afterward, he proceeded to consider their new tasks and the comparative freedom that college life would bring.

" College ? " said Hal. " Why, you're not going, are you ? "

"What do you mean?" asked Tom, faintly.

"Old Larkin says so—that's all. We talked about it yesterday."

"Nothing is decided," said Tom, changing the subject abruptly.

Something had been decided, of course. What? All the afternoon the wonder weighed upon him that the master, who should have been his champion, could spread this evil tidings with apparent calmness. He never quite forgave Mr. Larkin for that.

He returned home at sunset in a fit of depression. The light of all his days seemed to go out with this one. At the door he overtook his brother, whose long, monotonous day was just over, too.

"Grip," he said, "what does old Larkin mean?" His voice broke; he could not go on. But Grip understood at once.

"Come in, Tom," he said, with a grave face. "Come in, and talk it over."

Jane was still upstairs, hardly convalescent. They had the little drawing-room to themselves. Grip closed the door, and explained the situation as gently as possible. Tom had his own way to make in the world; that was clear. And the sooner he set about it, the better. There was no spare money to spend upon a university course. Even could the money be raised, what then? Other years must pass before he could depend upon a profession. How was he to live? "If Uncle

Mark were alive — ” Tom began. His brother shook his head. “ Oh, Grip, can’t it be managed ? ” he pleaded.

“ How ? Shall we beg ? ”

“ No,” said Tom, stoutly. “ Not that.”

Then he was told that Mr. Bolton, the hardware merchant, had offered to make a place for him, and even to pay him for his services. The Boltons did a great business ; their establishment was a source of supply for all the small dealers of the county. He would earn a hundred dollars the first year—much more than that when he got on ; and he would get on rapidly, become independent in no time ; it was a fine opportunity. Well ? What did he say ?

“ I can’t,” was Tom’s answer.

“ You must,” said Grip, sternly. Tom turned away, and looked out of the window at the fading twilight. Then Grip crossed the room, and laid his hand upon the boy’s shoulder.

“ Be a man, Tom,” he said, in a kinder tone. “ Grin and bear it ! A man can bear anything, if he only has the grit to think so.”

Tom always remembered that little scene. His eyes filled, until the black casement and the cold gray sky beyond it fairly danced before them. The sharp “ you must ” rang in his ears ; but the gentle pressure of Grip’s hand moved him more than words. He looked up, and tried to smile ; he had decided. Manhood, for him, dated from that moment.

"I will," he said, and the thing was done.

All the boys envied Tom for going into business, as they called it, while they plodded on their endless parasangs with Xenophon. Tom never referred to his disappointment, but, finding the cheerful way to be the best one, was helped out in it by the novelty of his life. Before long he began to feel a certain enjoyment in doing hard work well. To be knocked about among men gave him a sense of importance. In his small way he was dealing with the world, while his friends could only peep at it between the bars. What did boys know about life? His purse held money of his own earning. He was a man.

But in the following year, when these same boys transformed themselves into Harvard freshmen, Tom thought differently. They were about to deal with the world, and in the right way. The old pang was renewed and had to be lived down again. They would learn the things he longed to know. He must contrive to keep his head above water, even if he were caught in an eddy of the current. So he carried home books in strange languages, to rustle dictionary leaves and read hard in the lamplight. He was blessed with a good memory, and what he learned stood by him. It was a queer little store of knowledge that he thus accumulated, yet the process served to keep him out of mischief. In their vacation-time his friends could and did discuss with authority matters of which he was wholly ignorant; and this

was trying. But lessons of value often come to us, like angels, unawares; and we may fare much worse than to be thrown continually with those who know a little more than we have learned ourselves.

Mr. Bolton, his employer, if not precisely a model of all the Christian virtues, was a fair example of the shrewd, successful Yankee of commerce—a driver, as the saying goes. At once exacting and exasperating in his nature, he had a violent temper, a warm regard for himself, a corresponding disregard of others; fortunately, he liked Tom, who had very little to do with him and tried to do that little well; so that their relations were usually harmonious. Between them stood always Mr. Buck, the bookkeeper, one of whose many duties was to train Tom up in the way he should go, and whose influence upon the boy was of the best.

Jonas Buck was one of those happy surprises that startle us occasionally in our rough-and-tumble encounter with the world. Spare, dyspeptic, opinionated, and very plain of feature, he produced a first impression that was all unfavorable. He said a great deal, and much of his talk was cynical and pessimistic. By degrees one discovered that it was not to be taken seriously; that he was really amiable, warm-hearted, quick at doing little kindnesses, a domestic philosopher, cheerful under the infliction of a large family, the rasping trials of a small income. He murdered the

Republic's English; it was doubtful if he ever read a line beyond the daily newspaper, and the life of Daniel Webster—his vade-mecum; but, naturally keen and intelligent, he had acquired a good knowledge of men. He had been turned out early to battle for himself and others; poverty had always been the upper dog in the fight, and habits had formed him, not he his habits. This he understood now and accepted; he had ceased to hope for advancement in this life. He had always been a clerk, he would never be anything else probably; but he honestly believed that it was all a preparation for something better. What did it matter? The thing was, honestly to get through the world.

"Thomas, my boy, don't you never be a book-keeper!" he would say sometimes in the breathing-spaces of work. "Any fool can do it, and if he does, he won't be fit for nothin' else. Look at me! What's my life? Nothin' only figures, that won't come right. I dream about 'em, Thomas. I'm in hell all the time."

Nevertheless, when Tom was promoted to be his assistant, he congratulated him upon this forward step, and did his best to "learn" him, as he called it.

"Always tell of your mistakes," he said; "and don't be afraid to ask questions. If you don't know, find out; don't stop findin' out, whatever you do. Keep the run of things. A man had ought to know his books backward, so 't he could

balance 'em in the dark ; that is, if he sets out to earn his livin' that way."

One day, Tom inquired timidly what he thought of his pupil's progress.

"Well," he said, thoughtfully ; "you can't make a figure eight yet, and your colyumes ain't set as straight as I'd like to see 'em. You hain't got your tail feathers, Thomas ; but you've chipped the shell. And, on the whole, you're pretty sound, considerin' that it's you—and me that learned you."

He had served for a while as a private soldier in the war of the rebellion, which was then fresh in all minds. His knapsack had been shouldered from a sense of duty, not because he liked the smell of powder ; for soldiering was mean work, he said. When he fought his battles over it was with small enthusiasm, and he frankly admitted that he had suffered acutely when he found himself under fire for the first time.

"'Taint no use to lie about it," he explained. "I just felt sick—sicker'n a dog. And my knees were like crazy-bones ; there wa'n't no use in 'em."

"Did you want to run away ?" Tom asked.

"You bet I did. But where was I to run to ? Not home to my wife and babies. Thomas, I was afraid to do it. I had just the sense to say : 'Go it, Buck ! This is what you come for ; keep right on, and, when you're out of it, you be damned thankful.' And so I am ! Never tell me nothin' about glory ; I've been there, and it don't pay. The

Book says: 'Blessed are the peacemakers.' I hope it's true, for I'm a peacemaker, clean through and out again."

He had an undisguised respect for Tom's studious habits, and, after asking countless questions about the classics, he bought himself a Universal History to begin at the beginning. A few days later Tom inquired how he liked it.

"It's interestin'," he replied—"very interestin'. Those folks in Greece amounted to a good deal, didn't they?" But his zeal soon exhausted itself. Reading tired him. He supposed he was too old a dog to learn new tricks. His line, on the whole, was hardware.

Alas! it was not Tom's. Had any hope to the contrary existed in the boy's mind, the chilling monotony of the next year or two would have dispelled it. Even the treadmill hack may find his first day's walk amusing; but when the days go on, and the pasture-land he longs for draws no nearer, what wonder if he stops to consider for a moment why he was created. Then he learns that when he stops, the lash will surely fall, and his spirit breaks; he trudges on, poor brute, in dumb submission, but who dares think he has learned to like the service that with such a show of patience he performs?

Figures, endlessly! Figures, that Tom had hated almost from his cradle! Was he to lose himself among them, to become another Mr. Buck, incapable of any line but hardware? Was life

to be but a posting of items in great ledgers? Its one hope that the debit and the credit side would balance? At times he feared so; the more, perhaps, that he had mastered the fool's science, and could do his work with rapidity. But it was none the less a task. Under it he was often moody and despondent, yet he rarely complained; away from it a very trifle made him happy. He had youth on his side, and youth so easily forgets.

He remembered, though, sometimes; when his friends talked of choosing their professions, for instance, and jocosely reminded him that his case was settled. This seemed like turning the knife-blade in the wound. Settled; so it was! So the Siberian exile's case is settled, and perhaps it comforts him to be relieved of further care about the disposal of his life. But it did not comfort Tom especially, though he had the good sense to smile and hold his tongue. How he rushed into his studies after one of these consoling speeches! Bound hand and foot, as it were by imperial ukase, he would not be illiterate. His keepers should never make his thoughts their slaves.

These nights of study saved him; these and two shining examples of courage and resignation ever before his eyes—the examples of Grip and Mr. Buck. Between Tom and his brother there had risen the barrier of reserve common to most families. With the young it is always the friend who acts as confidant, never the near relation. But Grip was the family model, for all that. Tom

studied him carefully ; wanted to be like him ; admired his reticence, his tact, his ability to do the right thing well. Unquestionably, Grip had come in for a large share of the traditional inheritance — the Valentine pluck. Tom often wondered whether his day's labor was really as congenial to him as it seemed. If not, he was so much—very much—the more admirable.

The uncouth philosophy of Mr. Buck served as a guiding-lamp for Tom's feet over many rough bits of road. "Laugh at your load, and make it light," was one of his mottoes ; and accordingly his fiercest growl had a saving note of humor in it. Moreover, he felt keen sympathy for Tom, whom he often described to his wife as "a round peg in a square hole ;" and one of his self-imposed missions was to keep the boy's spirits up to what he called concert pitch : no easy task at times. "Guv'nor on his hind legs to-day, ain't he?" he would whisper when Tom's face lengthened after some sharp speech of their employer. "Jest you let him rair! He ain't a flea-bite to some of them non-commissioned chaps in the army. Keep still, and you've got him where his hair's short. No fun in hittin' a feller who don't hit back! He knows that as well as you do."

Or, hearing a sigh from his assistant's desk, he would throw down his pen, and go round to inquire into the cause.

"What's gone wrong, pony?"

"Everything," Tom would answer, showing some

account, over which he had sat up half the night, perhaps, in vain.

“Let the old hoss have a show at it!”

Then would follow much wrinkling of the brows, some hasty pencil computations, a muttered curse or two, and the treacherous error would be dragged to light.

“There, pony! Always remember the eleventh commandment, which is—‘Fret not thy gizzard!’ Look! Everything goes right.”

And Tom would assent to this gratefully. But, in his heart, he did not think so; nor, to tell the truth, did Mr. Buck.

CHAPTER II.

THE OTHER HALF OF THE PAGE

SO Tom fought his way through his teens, and, now nearly twenty, thought the world a very dull place, but lived on the hope of reversing that profound judgment. He felt as old as the years themselves that dragged their slow lengths by him wearily. How much happened in a single one of them! Something must happen to him, something fortunate, before long. It is always so at twenty. A little later, oh, a very little, the years go flashing by like minutes, and we find them almost uneventful. How hard, for instance, to distinguish the last one from the one before it? Time's plates are like the printer's: wearing out with frequent use, till the impressions become blurred and faint, at the last even undecipherable.

All this while he had heard nothing more about his father, nor was there any indication of his existence. Perhaps none of the family knew whether he was dead or alive. Once or twice Grip had seemed to be on the point of throwing more light upon this painful subject; then, apparently, he had found the task a hard one, and had postponed it, doubtless until some demand from Tom should

bring it about. Such a demand Tom determined to make at the first convenient opportunity ; but an accidental discovery of his led him to obtain the knowledge he wanted in a different way.

He went sometimes to the cemetery where his mother and his Uncle Mark were buried, in the same plot of green earth under the far-reaching shade of an elm-tree. And here he commonly went alone. The place was just out of the town, along a quiet country road, that made a pleasant stroll for a half-holiday afternoon. And in one of these solitary expeditions Tom lingered so long on the way that when he reached the cemetery-gate the hour for closing it was very near. He accordingly quickened his pace. There was no one about ; he had the quiet precincts all to himself, as he supposed. But at an angle of the path he suddenly saw a man in front of him hurrying on in the same direction, and instantly he recognized the short, gray figure for Mr. Hazeltine's.

Desiring no companionship, and this least of all, Tom dropped back to see which way his uncle's old friend would turn. Mr. Hazeltine kept straight on, unaware of any other presence, and at the enclosure set apart for the Sylvester family he turned and went in. Then Tom noticed that his hands were full of fresh violets, and there came into the boy's head a thought which he at once dismissed. "No," he said, "for Uncle Mark's grave ; that is all."

He made a wide detour, giving Mr. Hazeltine his

opportunity, and coming back to the Sylvester burial-place just after the old man had left it, while his retreating figure was still in sight. And then Tom found that the violets were strewn upon his mother's grave.

Often before he had seen fading flowers there—Jane's flowers, he had fancied. Had they been always Jerry Hazeltine's? And why should he of all people do this act of reverence for the dead? Tom went home asking himself these and many other questions that he could not answer.

He remembered seeing Mr. Hazeltine at his mother's funeral, to be sure, but never in her living presence. Obviously some mysterious relation, some tie, at least, of friendship, must at one time have existed between them. At all events, this oasis of tenderness in the desert of the old money-grubber's perverse and cross-grained nature was a curious revelation. Then Tom recalled Jerry's intimacy with his uncle and the significant glance which the two men had exchanged over his father's book. There the book was now on the shelf close at hand; and as Tom took it down, to inspect once more the faded signature, the whole scene came back to him, and he recollected small details of it that he had overlooked or forgotten. The slip of paper, for instance, with Mark Sylvester's name upon it. One of the two had kept that; why? Jerry Hazeltine knew, and must tell him. Here was the man of whom to seek the fullest information. And Tom had outgrown his boyish dread

of Mr. Hazeltine's personality. The man was ugly as a withered apple, hard, worldly, ill-tempered, perhaps; perhaps, too, his life had given him good cause to be all this and more: but there was a touch of human tenderness in him still. The little incident at the grave proved that.

So, one afternoon, Tom climbed the three flights of very dusty stairs that led to the grim old bachelor's abode. Jerry Hazeltine had always lived "down street," according to the idiom of Worthingham; that is to say, among the shops and other haunts of traffic where money changed hands. When he grew prosperous, instead of moving away, he simply added one or two rooms to his hermitage. No home could please him better, he was accustomed to state, except the narrow one to which, eventually, he would be carried feet foremost. Like a cat at mid-day, he had curled himself up there to stay.

Tom paused for breath upon the landing, and stared curiously at the door, which of course he had never before darkened. Mr. Hazeltine's card was tacked upon it, above the heavy lock with its small brass handle. Everything about the place looked odd and old-fashioned. Evidently he was about to step straight into the dark ages. From within came faint wailing notes of a violin.

At Tom's knock the music stopped; there was a movement of chairs, and then Mr. Hazeltine appeared at the door in his shirt sleeves, with a short pipe in his mouth. The visit must have aston-

ished him, though he did not turn a hair, so to speak, but, greeting Tom courteously, gave him a chair and then another for his feet; after which, perching himself upon a similar double support opposite his guest, he quietly awaited developments.

The room was as gray and forlorn as its singular occupant. The floor seemed to have settled under the weight of a safe set up in one corner, and all the furniture had taken a slant in its direction. Everything was askew, even to the pictures—old prints chiefly, with tarnished gilt frames. In one, Mary, Queen of Scots, walked to execution; in another, William III. conducted the Battle of the Boyne. There was a disreputable-looking mahogany sideboard with bottles and glasses upon it, amid a general litter of books, pamphlets, and sheets of music, which extended to the horsehair sofa, where the violin and bow were also lying. A great bluebottle fly buzzed in the dusty window, but lazily, as if he had little hope of stretching his wings again. Tom saw these things at a glance while he stated his errand as briefly as he could.

“Why do you come to me?” asked Mr. Hazeltine, when the little speech was over.

“Because nobody at home seems to want to talk about it,” Tom explained. “I suppose they could only tell me disagreeable things; but I think that I ought to know them—I am old enough.”

Mr. Hazeltine answered only by a long pull at his pipe, which gurgled doubtfully, Tom thought.

"You were my uncle's friend," he continued; "and you were there the day he talked with me about my father. You knew my mother too."

He had led up with malice aforethought to this last shot, which produced its effect. Mr. Hazeltine started; he had not expected any reference of that kind.

He puffed away, however, for a moment longer before he said :

"And what did your uncle tell you? How much do you know?"

Tom replied that he knew little beyond the fact that his father had then been alive somewhere, and in disgrace. What had he done? Was he likely ever to come back? He had ill-treated his wife—how?

Mr. Hazeltine put down his pipe, and drew a long breath. Then he rose and paced the floor nervously.

"Have a glass of sherry?" he asked, stopping suddenly at the sideboard.

"Thank you," said Tom.

"Thank you—yes? Or thank you—no?"

"Yes," rejoined Tom, emphatically, with an amusing consciousness that he himself had not known the meaning of his former answer.

"Whiskey, if you prefer it."

"Thank you—no!"

"My regards!" said Jerry, choosing the stronger stimulant, and disposing of it at a gulp. Then, while Tom sipped his sherry like a bird, his host

pulled out a bunch of keys, went over to the safe, unlocked it, and, after fumbling there for a while, came back with a file of dusty papers. These were folded and labelled with commercial uniformity. To run them through was the work of a moment; and, after doing this in silence, Mr. Hazeltine, returning to the first, unfolded that and handed it to Tom.

"This you will remember," said he.

It was only the old half-sheet, covered with specimens of his uncle's signature. Tom looked at them with a puzzled air.

"Yes," he replied, "I found this; but I don't know what it means. Why did you keep it? Why did Uncle Mark write his name here so many times?"

"He did not write it," said Mr. Hazeltine, bluntly. "That is your father's first attempt at forgery."

"Forgery!" gasped Tom.

"Yes. He tried it again with better success—more than once. See!"

And, as he spoke, the old man took from the file three or four old notes of hand, drawn for large amounts and stamped "paid." Two of these purported to be signed by Mark Sylvester; the others bore his endorsement.

"These are all forgeries," he said, "of the cleverest description. They were undoubtedly made and negotiated by your father—all of them—at about the same time. When the first came due

and was paid at the bank, your Uncle Mark at once discovered it. He sent for your father, who began by a general denial, then confessed to 'irregularity,' as he called it, in this one instance. There was a stormy scene. Your father, in the end, agreed to take himself off for good and all, upon the consideration of a sum of ready money—one thousand dollars, it was, cash on the nail. Your uncle threatened exposure, and brought him to terms. Mark had borne much; this was the last straw—or rather not the last. For within a very few days these other notes, of which he had no knowledge, were charged off to him. He assumed them without a word. It was not his way to make a fuss about things."

This speech, an unusually long one for him, Mr. Hazeltine delivered with business-like directness. Then he took up his pipe to knock away the ashes and refill it; while Tom mechanically examined the proofs of this long-forgotten crime, feeling much as if he had committed it himself—now that he knew, heartily wishing that he did not know.

"Did he ever come back?" he asked, faintly.

"Never to my knowledge."

"Do you know where he is? Is he alive?"

"Yes. He is said to keep a gambling-hell in Paris, under another name."

The papers slipped from Tom's hand. He stooped for them, and picked them up slowly one by one. His face was burning.

"And those other things?" he inquired, referring to the file upon which Mr. Hazeltine now replaced the notes. "What are they?"

"Letters of his. Will you read them?"

Tom hesitated.

"You may, if you choose," continued Mr. Hazeltine. "But they are not pleasant reading. What I have kept back concerns his treatment of your mother. I advise you to take that for granted."

"I do not care to read them," replied Tom.

Mr. Hazeltine's last words had been less matter-of-fact in their tone than had his former ones, and now he gave a sigh of relief.

"Good!" said he. "There was nothing to be gained by it. You know enough, in all conscience, as it is."

"Yes," Tom agreed.

Mr. Hazeltine looked for a thoughtful moment at the package before returning with it to his safe. There he stopped again, and drawing out the notes put them away carefully. Then he brought back the letters.

"What are you going to do?" Tom asked.

"These letters—— As you don't want to read them, and as I don't want to read them, suppose we put them out of harm's way?"

And striking a match, he touched them off, threw down the lighted paper, and, when it had burned itself out, ground the ashes into the carpet under his heel.

"There!" said he.

"I am very much obliged to you," stammered Tom, as he got up to go.

Mr. Hazeltine, suddenly turning from a machine into a man, took his hand and pressed it warmly.

"My boy," he said, "I was sorry to tell you this. But, on the whole, I was the man to do it. You will probably never meet your father. If you do, I am sure that you will neither like him nor be like him. You have your mother's eyes."

The eyes glistened now, and, though it was Tom's turn to speak, he answered only by a pressure of the hand still clasping his.

"God bless you!" said Mr. Hazeltine.

And so Tom acquired his information.

CHAPTER III.

LOVE MADE TO ORDER

WHILE Tom, by the selling of grindstones and the bringing his nose, metaphorically speaking, into daily contact with them, had matured in his way, Hal Rodney had developed too, in quite a different direction. A student only in name, university life could not make a dig of him, as he asserted. He was not one to grow hollow-eyed over books and glory in it; never, in after years, would he make an aureole for himself in art or science or letters. But he was far from dull; and the clever spurts he gave from time to time carried him along with the wave, if not on its crest. Honors were empty nothings to him; on the other hand, disgrace was something studiously to be avoided. He must never be turned back. *In medio tutissimus ibis*, said old Dædalus to his flighty bantling. That advice was sound and practical, but it might be improved upon, Hal thought. Consequently, instead of the middle course, he followed one well below the middle, thereby gaining time and strength for a thing about which he cared very much indeed.

That thing was the pursuit of pleasure. By this

it is not meant that he drank to excess or wasted his substance wantonly in other forms of riotous living. He brewed punches, it is true, and partook of them at what he considered the proper times. He won and lost money at cards now and then, but in moderation. He was fond of the theatre, and occasionally he went behind the scenes to bandy words with the ballet. He wanted to see and know everything, as do most of us at his age. But he did not wallow in the mire; if a splash fell upon him, he tried to brush it off, and generally succeeded. His idea of happiness was tolerably definite, and the early morning headache after a night's debauch had no place in it. Beastliness, he gave out, was not in his line. Those of his classmates who hunted down their degrees at a higher rate of speed were accustomed to say that Rodney was a good fellow, though rather a quiet one; the slowcoaches admired his facility; the boating and ball men accepted his subscriptions—he had a fair allowance, and was liberal—but reproved him for laziness. He chaffed them back lazily. He was in for a good time, and meant to have it; he would work by and by. Thus he interfered with nobody, and made many friends—too many, in fact. For him there was no Scylla, no Charybdis, but only the sunken reef of popularity.

In early life we are chameleons, all of us, assuming readily the dominant color of the lot into which we happen to be thrown. Your gardener's boy gains in gentleness daily under the subtle influence

of the flowers. You would never mistake him for a mechanic or a mason. Let him dip into books never so little, and a thin lacquer of cultivation begins to overspread him. The lacquer acquires a fine polish if he is sent to college, taking even a moderate rank there. Give him a year or two of good society, and you can do no more. He is a man now, and will shine with his own light. Later comes the choice of Hercules, which every man must make for himself.

That choice Hal Rodney had already made. The height of his ambition, never openly expressed perhaps, but perfectly clear in his own mind, was to become a successful man of the world. For this his equipment seemed entirely sufficient. He had perfect health, easy, pleasant manners; and he was not ill-looking. In time he would inherit something to keep him from want; he need never worry about money, even should he make no fortune for himself. This supreme possibility he considered by no means an extravagant one. Fortunes were acquired so easily and in so many ways. The main thing was to choose the right moment, to start in well. In this, his senior year, he must keep a sharp lookout, but enjoy himself thoroughly, let come what would afterward. He was a favorite in society; he knew many refined and charming women—many lovely girls, more refined and charming still. Why not marry? He often told Tom that he believed thoroughly in early marriages.

The old friendship still bound them closely, in

spite of many wrenches given it by absence and changing fortune. Tom, granted Hal's advantages, would have employed them in a different way; yet he thought Hal's ways were perfect. Hal still respected Tom for qualities which he felt were lacking in himself. No other friend of his quite filled Tom's place. They carried on a violent correspondence, and at certain seasons were much together. Hal had a talent for humorous description, and was sure of one sympathetic listener to applaud his triumphs or to bewail his grievances. He always declared that he told Tom everything.

Through these confidences, with the help of occasional visits to Hal's rooms, Tom made for himself a vivid picture of college life, whose prevailing tint was that of the rose. And as Hal was of a susceptible turn, and played at love-making very seriously, it appeared reasonably certain that he would secure before long the *summum bonum* of earthly happiness, and become the life-partner of one out of the many high-bred beauties with whom he waltzed through his leisure hours. Surely, no girl that Hal chose to ask could possibly refuse him. Perhaps he had met his fate already; the books said that a fellow did not always know it at first. Would it be the one he danced with last Wednesday fortnight? Or the other, who, as he wrote, had promised to sit out three waltzes with him at the next assembly? Both were pretty, graceful, and good dancers. Indispensable requisites! Hal's wife must, of necessity, be all these.

And why should he, Tom Sylvester, be backward any longer in matters of the heart? To fall in love was now his right, since he had grown to man's estate—an important experience that he could not well afford to do without. The bygone fancy for Hannah Lisle did not count, of course. That was a mere boyish whim. Since their first acquaintance she had made other visits to Worthingham, and he had noted, with pain, defects in her character. Even her features, pretty as they were, had ceased to be entirely faultless in his eyes. Beauty like hers, while it lasted, would do good service as a potent charm; but how long would it last? He pined for something better—an ideal beauty of the soul. True, his success in the world, thus far, hardly warranted him the luxury of a wife. But that was dipping into the future with what might be called a business view of the case. He had heard his chief, Mr. Bolton, say that there should be no sentiment in business; indeed, it was one of the successful merchant's favorite aphorisms. Admitting this was to admit the converse too; in sentiment, no business. Success in love should be its crowning glory, not its essence. The hopeless lover must always find a joy in martyrdom. Did not Ruy Blas, in the play, madly love the Queen, and take fierce delight in saying so? And when he died for her sake without winning her, did not his death ennoble him?

Thus Tom, brooding late over his fire, with the

love poems of the ages to read, to quote, and to apply unto himself, slowly built his own scaffold, and took his place upon it to his entire satisfaction as love's interesting victim. For the object of his passion he made a choice which was entirely characteristic. Calmly, by degrees, he decided that he loved his former playmate, Clover Stanhope, to desperation. In various ways this love supplied the desirable element of sacrifice. The Stanhopes, though they lived upon Gentility Hill, and belonged, as Mr. Buck said, to "the quality," were by no means rich, in the first place. The father, though the first and best of the Worthingham doctors, had a large family to bring up; it was well understood that the two ends of his income would just about meet annually, but no more. Then Clover, plain in her earliest years, now growing into womanhood, was plainer still, to such an extent that she herself must be painfully aware of it. Even Tom pitied her for this uncouthness of feature. But was not pity akin to love? And did she not try her best, as all well-bred uncomeliness always does, to atone for this deficiency by kind thoughts and agreeable manners? Intelligent and amiable, she danced well, she loved music, and could sing upon occasion. She liked Tom too; her face lighted up with pleasure at the sight of him. Here, then, was his beauty of the soul, close at hand, to be had, doubtless, for the asking. But it suited him better not to ask just yet; to go home, rather, and sit apart,

sighing like a furnace, making woful ballads—not, indeed, to his mistress's eyebrow, but to the estimable qualities behind it. What would it avail to ask? They could not marry and settle on nothing a year; his business training already taught him that. No! He must keep silent, and hug his sorrow. That he loved must be his consolation. These were love's pangs the poets talked about. Had he not, in his own humble way, all the ardent hopelessness of Ruy Blas or Romeo?

Forgive him. He was so young, and he really thought he loved her. Could that thought have been kept entirely to himself, it would have done him only good, and to nobody the slightest harm. But gossip makes short work in a small community. The meanest of us has his audience to watch the drama of his life. The smaller this audience the more attentive is it, as a rule. And Tom's friends took due note of his attentions to Clover, exaggerating the importance of them in their juvenile way. Moreover, since there is no fun in loving hopelessly without a confidant, Tom showed his verses to Hal, who tried to scan each foot with due solemnity. Later, in an unguarded moment, he chaffed Tom good-humoredly among his fellows. Whereat Tom changed color, and retorted lightly, making no denial, evidently not displeased. Then Clover's brother, Sidney, commonly known as Pug, pricked up his ears, and said nothing, but stored away his knowledge; of which he made sarcastic use one day not long afterward when

Clover had offended him. She rose in wrath, declaring hotly that Pug was too outrageous for anything; then fled from the field. For in her heart she felt that sensitive organ leap for joy—visibly, she feared. What! was she, then, really lovable? And did Tom Sylvester, of all others, really find her so? She looked in the glass at her burning face until the tears streamed over it: it was so very plain. How could any one love her? And yet if it were true?

That torturing hope, once admitted, returned persistently to make her miserable. None knew of it; she made no confidences. No one could be arraigned for doing any wrong, and its chief promoter never dreamed that any wrong existed. Had he been told, he would have sworn that he had given her no jot of what is called encouragement: that the mischief had grown on itself, and that nobody was to blame.

CHAPTER IV.

COUSIN MARMADUKE

AT the time of Mark Sylvester's sudden death his second son, Marmaduke, the handsome absentee, had just turned over a new leaf, which, as everybody said, was very much to his credit. Heretofore, in the contest for the world's good will, his sins of omission had handicapped him heavily. There was never positive harm in him to be held up for open disapproval; but, in the eyes of all except the fondest, there was far too little good. Selfishness and indolence were certainly among his failings; and he had that general inefficiency so distasteful to New England. His father and mother spoiled him, it was thought; he had never done anything, he never would do anything. Thus left, as it were, in limbo by a stern social judgment, undeniably well-grounded, he yet manifested so clearly the saving graces of good looks, good manners, and good nature as to come off with many a kind word, even from the narrow, homekeeping spirits of his native town which he so rarely revisited.

The faithful tenants of that lesser paradise were therefore both surprised and pleased to hear that

the trifler had suddenly hearkened to the voice of duty, and had turned from his aimless leisure to a serious occupation. It appeared that, travelling in Norway, he had fallen in with the London banker, Mallow, of the house of Mallow & Co. The two men had journeyed on together; the journey had resulted in a warm friendship. Finally the banker had offered Marmaduke Sylvester a partnership in his house—that is, a chance to settle down in life comfortably and respectably, dependent only upon his contributing a certain amount of additional capital to the firm's resources. Marmaduke, desiring to accept the offer, had written for his father's consent—and the money. And Mark Sylvester, overjoyed, had supplied both with the least possible delay; when these particulars were made public in Worthingham, the new partner had already established himself at his post in the city of London. Here was matter for town talk and general congratulation in his former home during many days. The small flood of joy had hardly subsided, when Mark Sylvester died, and the town was overwhelmed with sorrow.

His father's death brought Marmaduke home for a brief visit. He had business responsibilities now, which could not be ignored; he had hardly come, before he was forced to hurry back; and Tom, still a school-boy, saw little of him then. Yet that little strengthened the early impression of his brilliant cousin, whom he had always been inclined to idolize. Marmaduke liked him too.

Once, finding Tom deep in the magnificent revenges of Monte Cristo, he chaffed him in French about it, and was amused and pleased at Tom's quick repartee in that tongue. But one morning he called the boy out of school to bid him good-by and cross his palm with a golden sovereign. Then he went laughing away into the world of men, while Tom returned thoughtfully to the world of books, longing to be big and free and old.

And now that Tom's shoulders were bowed down with the weight of his twenty years, Marmaduke came back once more for a long vacation, looming up one day among the hardware with a hearty greeting. He had changed so much that Tom did not recognize at first this handsome, portly fellow of something over thirty, six feet tall, blue-eyed and yellow-bearded, fair and florid in complexion, precise in his dress. Prosperity was expressed in every line of him. And to this splendor Tom showed with a sorry contrast. He had been pulling over bolts and bars in the cellar, from which he emerged in his shirt sleeves. His hands were grimy with iron rust; but Marmaduke shook them both nevertheless, thinking, at the first glance, that Tom's dark face looked pinched and pale and that his eyes were much too bright, but not saying so: only announcing that his return was to be celebrated at home that night, and bidding Tom to the small family feast.

"On tue le veau gras, là-bas, tu sais, mon cher—pour l'enfant prodigue!" And he was gone.

"A foreign gentleman?" asked Mr. Buck, looking after the stranger down the street from his high perch in the window.

"No; it was my cousin, Marmaduke Sylvester," said Tom, pleased at the notice taken of his distinguished relative.

"Oh!" returned the other, dryly. "Lives in London, don't he? What did he talk? French, wa'n't it?"

"French, yes."

"What was it all about, any way?"

"The prodigal son; that's all."

"Prodigal son?" said Mr. Buck, interested at once. "Write it out for me, will you?"

Tom scribbled down the phrase, and passed it over to him; then was obliged furthermore to pronounce each word separately and translate it, while Mr. Buck followed the process with his eyes and ears.

"Queer, ain't it?" he said, reflectively. "How did folks ever come to talk like that? I guess Uncle Dan'l Webster's English is good enough for me."

But he put the document away in his pocket-book, to show it to his wife as a literary curiosity.

That evening was a merry one at Aunt Sylvester's. The widow herself joined in the mirth, as though the grief and change so disheartening to her of late had never been. She could hope now for no higher earthly joy than this of having her favorite son at home again, telling his

wondrous tales of travel and adventure, answering all her eager questions about the mysteries of London life. She seemed to Tom that night the Aunt Sylvester of the old, happy days, when she had a house full of servants at her command, when her lightest whim had only to be spoken to be gratified,—but softened a little, with her sharpness smoothed away. O crowning mercy of forgetfulness, which alone makes it possible to live our lives out to the end! A little while, and we can smile and talk once more, even though the lips that made life dear to us lie motionless and silent in a grave.

When the family party broke up, Tom walked home with his sister, who had now regained her health and all her wonted activity. Marmaduke, wanting a breath of fresh air, followed them, joining Grip, with whom, heretofore, he had never felt much sympathy. Grip was two or three years the younger, to begin with, and was cursed with a devil of a conscience, Marmaduke said, that made him somewhat chilling. A stern Puritan spirit cropped up in Grip at times, no doubt; but then he had not been blessed with an indulgent father; on the contrary, he had doubled his small rôle in life, and, for the greater part of it, had been forced to play both father and son. Now Marmaduke thought better of him, saying to himself, as they talked in a friendly, intimate way, that Grip had a long head and a clear one. Later their talk grew more serious, and was carried on with lowered

voices. Tom, who kept a few steps in advance, could not overhear a word of it. He wondered what they found so interesting.

Marmaduke turned back at their gate, and Tom went straight to bed. On his way up he heard the drawing-room door close gently, and he knew that Grip and Jane discussed some matter of importance there a long time. What was it? News of his father perhaps. He dreamed that night about him.

But with his father neither of these conferences had anything whatever to do. The mystery about them was all cleared up a week or two later, when Grip, taking Tom apart, and watching his face narrowly, asked him, with apparent carelessness, how he would like to live abroad, and noted, not without pain, the look of joy that flashed up in his younger brother's eyes.

"What do you mean?" Tom stammered.

"Mallow & Co. have lately established a branch house in Paris. Marmaduke offers you a place there. It is a chance perhaps; but you would have to live abroad."

Then while his brother went into details, Tom's radiant expression gave place to one of calm delight. The pay, at first, would not be large; the work would be new, and difficult to learn; there would be advantages, of course, but also drawbacks—not the least of which, as Grip reiterated, must be reckoned the inevitable term of exile. After all, the step need not be taken hastily;

it was undoubtedly worth considering, but he had plenty of time for that.

"I have considered," Tom replied. "When am I to go?"

"Not for six weeks. Marmaduke has taken his passage for September. You will go out with him."

And Grip sighed, as he spoke, to find that, even in his own mind, the plan had already grown from a mere possibility into a definite event. It was not that he wished to set his face against the change Tom desired, perhaps wisely; the readiness was all. That Tom without a second thought could turn his back upon home, friends, country, all that he had known, in one moment, disappointed him. Grip was a good American.

It was settled then. And, manifestly, the happiest days that Tom had ever spent were these that followed. As one who looks for the first time upon the shining ocean forgets its danger, seeing only lines of beauty in it, from the white foam of the shore to the dim lustre of the blue horizon: so he seemed lost to any sense of doubt or difficulty, had no dread of loneliness or disappointment, no fear of any discrepancy between the actual and his ideal. The race was all to run—its prize as yet impalpable; but he assumed that to be the only one worth winning, as much his own, as if he held it in his hand. The commonest things took on new colors, as though a sunset light transfigured them. His last hours among the hardware were his best; never had he worked so quickly

and so easily. Mr. Buck declared that he was born to be a bookkeeper, after all, and had better let well enough alone. The old Yankee felt certain misgivings about the enticements of Paris, as he called them; and seriously asked Tom if it were too late to change his mind.

Jane also was sorry, and did not hesitate to express her feelings. With Mr. Larkin, who took the other ground, she had a stormy scene; rounding it off by calling the good school-master hard names, for which, in a repentant fit, she wrote him an ample apology afterward. Then, arguing no more, she curbed her tongue and became aggressively resigned. But half in jest, half in earnest, she took Tom to task for his high spirits, which, she declared, were shameful and insulting. Had he no affection, then, for his family and his friends? What had they all done to him that he was so glad to be rid of them?

They made a secret of the scheme, at first; in case of accident, Jane said, with an inward prayer for some destructive miracle. On the Sunday afternoon before the formal announcement, the brothers took a long walk together, out toward that wooded barrier of the hills, which Tom in his boyhood had feared were insurmountable. He told Grip now confidently how often he had stared at them and beyond them. This led to other admissions of a confidential nature. The old barrier of reserve between the two had also broken down. Then, for the first time in Tom's remembrance, his

brother referred to their father's miserable career, showing no surprise at Tom's knowledge, but confirming it, telling frankly all he knew. His statement merely supplemented the others with details which were not agreeable; the long and short of the case being, Grip said, that the man was a thorough scoundrel, who had fortunately passed out of their lives. If Tom should meet him over there in Europe, no good could come of it, probably no harm; to avoid him altogether would, of course, be best and not too difficult. The man had sunk so low now that such a meeting was unlikely to occur, wherever he might be.

"The man!" That word resounded dismally above all the others. Grip was speaking of their father, but they had none—only "the man!"

"I am sure that I shall see him," Tom said, after a pause.

"I hope not."

"Has he ever written to you?"

"No. Why should he? It would put no money in his purse."

"But he is still alive."

"Undoubtedly. Such fellows are long-lived, and Marmaduke thought he recognized him in the street, three months ago."

"He has changed his name, Mr. Hazeltine said ——"

"So you heard of it from him?"

"In part—yes." And Tom described the interview.

"You should have come to me. You did not know what you were doing. Poor old Jerry! It must have been very hard for him to go over all that ground."

"Why hard?"

"Because he loved your mother. She refused him more than once, but he would not give up hope. Her marriage upset him, he became morose, unbearable. The sorrow preyed upon him like a disease; he has never recovered from it. That is the secret of his lonely life."

"Secret? Doesn't everybody know?"

"No; he kept it to himself. She knew, but no one else. Your uncle, suspecting it, forgave Jerry his ill-temper, and remained his only friend. I followed the fashion, and sneered at him once before your mother, who then told me the story. People call him ugly as a hedgehog; but the hedgehog has a heart, I suppose; and so has he. You found that out, yourself."

Tom was silent. His thoughts fled back to that dreary room, with the dust of many years lying in it, undisturbed; and to its drearier inmate, cross-grained and repellent, puffing at his worn-out pipe, drinking to console himself, alone. A little thing had done that—a word, of which, perhaps, his mother had bitterly repented, just too late.

It was Grip who broke the silence.

"Tom, what are you thinking about?" he asked.

"I was thinking what a fight it all is; if not in

one way, in another. Sooner or later, things go wrong with all of us; don't they?"

"Yes; but we need not all be hedgehogs, Tom; Jerry's luck was hard, yet not uncommon. It's his own fault if we don't like him. The world won't put up with any nonsense. I remember a line of Shakespeare that old Larkin was very fond of quoting when I went to school. 'In the reproof of chance lies the true proof of men.' That means that when a good fellow is knocked down, he gets up and goes on fighting."

"I ran away once," thought Tom, suddenly recalling his long-forgotten skirmish with the Scrouger; "but I won't any more." Then he said aloud:

"I'll fight till I die, Grip, if that's what I'm here for."

"It is just that, and nothing else. Do your best, whatever happens; and when you're in a scrape, don't fail to let me know."

"You will be a long way off," said Tom, fully realizing, for the first time, the ocean's width. "I wish you were going too."

"This is the place for me, I think," Grip rejoined. They turned back toward the town below them; its distant outlines were projected now against a clear, autumnal sky, and all its vanes and spires glistened. They saw the whole of it in one glance. A little place; a very narrow world to live and die in; and yet the light became it.

"What a splendid sunset!" said Tom, after another silence, as they came down.

"Yes," returned Grip, with something like a sigh. "I think you will find your country a pretty good one, after all."

CHAPTER V.

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

PUG STANHOPE, in a playful mood, told his sister Clover that she bore the heart-breaking news of Tom's approaching departure very well indeed; and she, in the same spirit of mirth, so far as one could see, replied with a hope that no heavier misfortune than this would ever come upon her. He referred to the matter again when occasion tempted him. But she maintained so well her attitude of indifference, that he soon forbore to tease her in that way. She would not even take the trouble to hit back; and, after a few trials, his joke, like a worn-out shuttlecock, fell to the ground between them.

Tom had unfolded his plans to her with much solemnity, one day as they walked home from church together. It was a most serious step, he said, but he had considered it most carefully; a man must see something of the world, if he hoped to get on in it; at home a man was always hampered, more or less; abroad, a man could gain his experience, and profit by it; his own prospects were brilliant, everything promised well. Thus he talked on and on, so glibly, with such conviction,

that he gave himself no chance to notice how silent Clover was. When he ceased to speak there came a blank, and he was forced at length to an appeal for her opinion.

"Do you want to go?" she asked, as if he had not betrayed his ardent longing to be off in every look and tone.

"Under the circumstances—yes," he answered.

"Then it is best, of course. We shall miss you very much—all of us. You must never forget us, Tom."

"Never."

Then she humored him, and led him into describing these brilliant prospects somewhat more fully. She saw that they could talk of nothing else. And it seemed easier to let him do the talking.

"And when shall you come back?" she inquired, as their walk ended at her door.

"Ah! I don't know. One of these fine days."

She looked up at him, and smiled.

"You are so glad to go! Good-night. I wish you the best of all good things."

They shook hands and parted. He turned away; hesitated a moment later, half turned back. But she was already gone. Why should she wait there longer? She wanted to be alone, out of sight; and retreating silently to her room she locked herself in, and broke down in a crying-fit. If Pug had seen her then!

On that same evening she came often into Tom's mind. But it was only a secondary place there

that he had to offer her. For the time being his fine fever of love was overmastered by the fever of adventure. A man must see the world! So the boy, dreaming always, but in his waking hours most extravagantly, slept that night uneasily; and sitting up in the dark, worked out a golden scheme by which he was to come back and marry Clover one of these fine days; then suddenly found himself lashed to a spar alone on a tossing, angry sea, into which Grip plunged to save him—but too late; for he sank with a fearful cry, and woke trembling from his nightmare in the calm sunshine of another morning.

They made a festival for him of the swift days that followed. Dinners were given in his honor. He was the lion of the hour. The elders of the county stopped in the street to congratulate him; then smiled, and said he had good courage. He would not understand, he only half heard them. He walked as though his feet were winged, with heart so light that it was hard to keep his pulses within bounds. The town seemed like a cage in which he must linger for a moment more; but the door stood open, and his fancy was already out of it.

One afternoon he paid his last respects to Mr. Hazeltine. The old man had already heard the news, and listened to Tom's review of it with chilling calmness. He offered no advice, said nothing for or against the project, only nodded gravely. So that the boy, fearing to ask for an opinion, became

more and more dispirited, and stumbled in his talk. When he made a movement to go, old Jerry, bustling about, produced alcohol in various forms to drink the adventurer's health, and clinked glasses with him so unsteadily that Tom thought he must have been at his decanters more than once that day. Finally, he took from his pocket an old-fashioned pencil-case, which he begged Tom always to carry in remembrance of him. It was of curious design; a miniature ivory column, the capital, forming the seal in which was cut the letter H, elaborately wrought in gold. Tom thought its intrinsic value greater than it really was, and he would have preferred to decline the gift. But his hesitation brought a look of displeasure into the old hedgehog's face; so the keepsake was accepted, as well as the blessing that went with it. Then Tom turned his back upon the sunless place and went slowly down the stairs, feeling as if it were the door of a tomb which had just closed behind him.

That none might fail him in his hour of triumph, chance brought Hannah Lisle to pass a few days in Worthingham—his last there. She professed to take unbounded interest in his plans, and encouraged him to talk of them down to the smallest detail; drawing Grip, too, into their talk, that she might have the benefit of his maturer judgment. Tom, quite failing to observe that the prospect of his prolonged departure caused no pain to the wayward little beauty, mentally compared her methods with Clover's, to the disadvantage of the latter.

Hannah was a very interesting girl, after all. He was half ready to fall in love with her over again. But then, what good would it do? He was going away.

The last week came ; and for one of its last days, still in Tom's honor, there had been arranged a lily-party, as it is called in New England ; that is to say, an expedition to gather our native water-lilies at that early hour of the morning, when the sweet, snow-white blossoms take their first look at the sunlight. A few miles from Worthingham, a chain of small lakes winds off among the hills ; and in the summer of those days all the remoter coves and inlets were sprinkled with these star-like flowers, wasting their sweetness, for the most part, upon unbroken solitude. At the first lake boats could be obtained ; they would meet in the boat-house, row on indefinitely, picking as they went, until each boat had its full load of lilies ; then, after breakfasting at some point upon the shore, they could still be at home again, before day there had fairly begun. This was the plan, needing, as Hal Rodney said, fine weather and Dutch courage to see it through. For he objected to early rising, and, like Cassio, wished courtesy would invent some other custom of entertainment.

But the morning was of the loveliest ; and Hal, who had promised to drive the Sylvesters to the lake, gave his cheery whistle at their door with unexpected promptitude. Jane was ready for him, and came out with much circumstance

to stow away her contributions to their morning meal.

"Here are the rolls and sandwiches," she said ; "and this is the coffee in the sherry-bottle. Take care ; that lump of ice is dreadfully heavy, but it will be all gone in an hour, I dare say. Did you ever see a finer day than this one ? I do wish Marmaduke could have been here, just to know what weather we can get up when we try."

"He didn't come on ?" Hal inquired.

"Oh, no ; he scorned us. Tom is to meet him in New York the day after to-morrow. Come, boys," she called impatiently ; "it's getting late."

"School doesn't keep, to-day, Jane," said Guy, when he and Tom at last appeared.

"And I suppose you expect the sun to take a half-holiday. But he is working harder than ever. The dew is dry already. Look ! Not a cloud in the sky—it's simply perfect. Tom needn't tell me that they do these things better in France."

Tom smiled, and chaffed back. As they drove through the suburbs, Mr. Lisle hailed them, and they drew up for a moment. "Don't forget me, Tom," said he ; "I shall never forget you. Good-by, for we may not meet again." His tone was that of a final farewell, impressing itself upon the boy's mind as they drove on. Mr. Lisle was an old man ; that they would never meet again was only too probable. And how many other fearful changes might occur if his absence were prolonged !

Even though all went well, nothing would look quite the same when he came back. 'These friends, if they lived, would have new wrinkles that he did not know. These young maples they were passing would have grown too old to be recognized. He could take with him the recollection of existing things, but only as they existed at this moment. And Tom, becoming silent while the others laughed and talked, realized for the first time that the face of nature changes hourly, and that to the home-keeping soul is granted one inestimable privilege, namely, that of advancing always in the same plane with life-long associations, and of appreciating the changes of the hour as little as he appreciates the motion of the spheres.

A large and merry party met them at the boat-house; and Tom exerted himself to make merry with the rest. But the untimely thought had come to stay, and it oppressed him all the morning as they paddled through the silent water or tugged at the slippery stems of the lilies. He eyed the well-known scene with unwonted keenness. This was a world no longer to be his, and he must do his best to remember every line of it. Clover and Hannah Lisle were talking of something to be done next week. He was already out of it—well out of it, to be sure—but still he wished they would talk of something else. Next week he would be "ever climbing up the climbing wave." Whatever lay beyond it, it certainly would not be the peace of lotos-eating such as this. He

shivered to think how little he knew the world of men.

New fields of lilies opened out before them ; but the boats were heaped high with fragrant mounds, and the lotos-eaters finding themselves damp and hungry, went ashore for breakfast. Jane and Mr. Larkin superintended this, the former spreading the cloth in a shady spot, while the schoolmaster broke some eggs into a saucepan, and smoked them solemnly over a slow fire. Hannah thought the place looked as if there were snakes about, and seated herself a little apart from the others at a point favorable for instant flight ; a proceeding which led Cora Merrifield privately to inform her nearest neighbor that Miss Lisle was a hopeless mass of affectation. As at all picnics, the meal was marked by great variety and profusion ; a horn of plenty overflowed upon the grass, around which the group made the prettiest of Watteau pictures. Then, dispersing, they distributed themselves by twos and threes along the woodland paths until all the cool, green landscape was flecked with brilliant color. The boldest snake this Eden held must have slid away in fear before such an invasion of the shining progeny of Eve.

But the spirit of contradiction still had the better of Tom, and he preferred to extract a mild form of bitterness from the scene rather than to dwell upon its beauty. So, after joining one of these subdivisions of the company, he deliberately

dropped behind and struck off into the woods alone. With no definite point in view, he pressed on through a tangle of underbrush, until he came suddenly upon another path, narrow and grass-grown, where all was quiet except for the call of a locust, that hushed itself instantly as he stirred with his step the first autumn leaves. Then remembering that this led to a spot of great seclusion known as the Hermitage, he followed it up to a small pool, the mere overflow of a brook which trickled down the hillside among broken boulders overgrown with ferns. Below, the brook ran on in sunlight that streamed across the silvery limb of a birch thrust out low enough to trail its leaves in the water. Above, the sky was of so deep a blue that it might have overhung the shaft of a well, and Tom, looking up, fancied that he saw a star in it. This was the Hermitage, which Tom, having but lately made the world his choice, actually wished were a real one with him for hermit. He threw himself down at full length to drink from the pool and bask in the sun. "Not a bad place for a shanty," he thought, "if a fellow cared to study nature like old what's-his-name, and let the world go by. Jane was right; this is just about perfect." Then he caught sight of some purple flowers peeping out between the rocks, and he climbed far up the brook to get them. While he was thus employed, the sound of familiar voices in animated conversation surprised him; and looking back, he saw that his sister and

old Larkin had wandered into the little glade almost upon his heels. They were quite unconscious of his presence, and their talk was of an unusual nature. He had overheard a fragment of it, before he well knew what he was about.

"Certainly not," said Jane; "how could you ever dream of such a thing?"

"I don't know," stammered Mr. Larkin, strangely embarrassed, and blushing like a school-boy. "People do marry, sometimes."

Jane tossed her head indignantly. "You cannot mean to tell me," she continued, "that I ever gave you one atom of what is called encouragement."

"What has that to do with it? The question is ——"

"Excuse me, this is the question; did I, or not?"

"No," replied Mr. Larkin, gloomily.

"Very well then. Both questions are answered."

"Is this ultimate?" demanded the schoolmaster, in a faint voice.

"By all means ——"

Tom stayed to hear no more, but dropping his flowers, crept away into the woods unperceived. When he was out of danger he laughed loud and long. The sheepishness of his former master's wooing struck him as extremely ludicrous; and this bashful lover was the walking encyclopædia of whom he used to stand in awe! "Jane too, of all people," he reflected; "I wonder she didn't

box his ears." He made a circuit that should bring him out almost at the camping-ground. But drawing near the path, he heard footsteps and stopped short, lest an encounter with the unmated couple should lay him open to suspicion. It proved, however, this time to be Grip and Miss Lisle passing him by almost within reach of his hand. Apparently the tempered light of the wood had a subduing influence upon them; for they walked in Indian file and gravely, exchanging no word so far as Tom could hear. In a few moments he followed them to the rendezvous, which he was the last to reach. Jane and Mr. Larkin were busy with the baskets, and showed no sign of the recent crisis in their affairs. Hannah, in the highest of spirits, sat in the stern of one of the boats, scattering bread-crumbs to a school of minnows. His brother Guy, upon the bank, was skipping stones over the water with tremendous energy, to the delight of Clover and Miss Merrifield. Hal and Pug requested Tom to look alive and load the boats. This done, they were just pushing off when Mr. Larkin, addressing the company at large, inquired who had lost anything.

"Not I!" said all at once, including Tom, who then discovered, just too late, that it was he.

"What is it?" somebody asked.

"This," replied the schoolmaster, holding up the ivory pencil-case which had been Mr. Hazeltine's.

"Mine, thank you," said Tom ; "where did you find it?"

"At the Hermitage," returned Mr. Larkin, immediately regretting that his conscience had not permitted him to swerve a hair's breadth from the truth.

Tom kept his self-control admirably. But he dared not look at Jane, whose eyes, he felt sure, were fixed upon his face; instead, he stared straight out before him—as it happened, straight at the boat where Hannah Lisle was sitting. She, to his surprise, gave proof of mental agitation in a marked degree. Her eyes met Tom's only to turn away, while her cheeks flushed with a vivid, and, as he thought, a most becoming crimson. Fortunately the others were busy with the pencil-case, which passed from hand to hand; and no one else appeared to notice Hannah's ripple of excitement. It was there and gone again in an instant, but it had sufficed to divert the current of Tom's mind.

"So they went there too," he thought; "what did they talk about, I wonder? Something besides snakes, or I'm a Dutchman." He looked at Grip, who was pulling the stroke oar of another boat, apparently without a thought beyond its blade; then once more at Hannah, whose habitual light-heartedness had returned to her. Thus, outwardly as gay as the morning—which, nevertheless, the old boatman at the landing pronounced to be a storm-breeder—they rowed themselves back within the

pale of conventionality, where no further disclosures were to be apprehended.

Their weather-prophet was a wise one, as Tom had reason to consider three days later, when he stood alone in a pelting storm on the deck of the huge ocean steamer, at the hour fixed for her departure. Marmaduke had failed him, delaying his passage for a whole month on account of weighty business complications ; and the great step so ardently desired Tom was to take all by himself. The scene before him was not enlivening. The customary band of friends to be left behind had been much reduced in numbers by the rain that fell in torrents. The few remaining huddled under wet umbrellas, at a corner of the pier, or retreated gloomily to the shelter of the storehouse ; neither there nor among his fellow-passengers could Tom discover one friendly face. This dismal opening to his new enterprise might well have cooled the ardor of an older adventurer than he. A fit of depression settled down upon him, and when the gangway was withdrawn, it seemed to disconnect him from the world. At that awful moment he would have chosen to bear the ills he knew, and go ashore ignominiously, had the choice been offered him. But the ship swung out little by little, the gulf widened perceptibly, retreat was cut off, and the step that costs was taken.

There came a sudden stir in the group at the angle of the pier. The umbrellas tossed wildly this way and that, till, to his amazement and delight, a

figure he recognized had struggled out between them. "How are you, Thomas? how are you?" shouted this new-comer across the intervening stretch of water. "All right!" he called back, smiling, though his eyes were full of tears. But Mr. Buck, he hoped, was too far off to see them. "All right! Awfully kind of you to come!"

"Heard you was alone—happened to be here—had to say good-by—" returned Mr. Buck, in successive gasps. "Not good-by, neither. *O revoy!*"

And swelling with pride at this proof of his mastery in the language of the rude barbarian, the old war-horse laughed aloud.

"*Au revoir!*" replied Tom, in his best accents, laughing too.

"*O revoy!* pony, *O revoy!*" Mr. Buck repeated, furling his umbrella and tying a red bandana handkerchief to its tip, regardless of the rain. "*O revoy! O revoy!*"

The dock, with all its dripping roofs and dull surroundings, slipped away beyond the reach of voices. Behind, the landmarks of the city loomed up dimly through the heavy atmosphere. The ship plunged forward, flinging far astern the first white bubbles of her long wake. She was off. But for some time longer Tom, from his post at the taff-rail, could make out the crimson speck that signalled to him his old comrade's persistent hope in his return.

CHAPTER VI.

OTHER TIMES, OTHER MANNERS

A LONG, narrow street of gray stone houses leading from the heart of a busy city to the sea ; steep roofs of moss-grown tiles with many twisted chimney-pipes stretching up into the dull sky-like writhing arms ; an imperishable tower blackened by centuries of storm and stress, through all of which its sweet-voiced bells have noted each quarter-hour in Time's lazy flight ; the rough pavement swarming with humanity in motley garb—cassocks, uniforms and blouses, snowy caps and grimy *sabots*, jumbled together as at some festival-parade : this was Tom Sylvester's ineffaceable first impression of the old world, as he viewed it with mingled sadness and delight from his hotel-window at Havre in the foggy light of a cheerless autumn morning.

To the simple freshness of a New England country town no stronger contrast could easily be opposed than that of the scene before him. Architecturally considered, to be sure, the Rue de Paris lacks striking features and bears a family likeness to fifty streets in the provinces of Northern France ; but every line there is stamped with the earmark of antiquity, and it has moreover a character of its

own, compounded of many simples, outlandish to a rare degree. The ground-floor shops, no larger than prison-cells, are heaped with barbaric pearl and gold cunningly disposed to catch the eye. Stuffs of the East, gigantic shells of heavenly hues, Dutch silver and Dresden china, idols, ostrich-eggs and samovars fill the windows; and the sidewalks are narrowed to the impassable point by cages of living parrots—never elsewhere did so many come together out of Africa—shrieking, whistling, and swearing in a dozen keys and languages. At every corner an unexpected glimpse of the sea, now limitless, now bounded by a lattice-work of masts and spars, presents itself; and every hour of the day is one of hurry and excitement in this port of arrival and departure for all lands.

Tom had arrived late the night before, after a monotonous and uneventful voyage. His fellow-passengers had been chiefly of the class known as commercial, and he had formed among them no lasting friendships. Parting from all without a pang, he had been conveyed in the dark to this unpretentious lodging, recommended by the ship's purser—a jolly little Marseillais in whom he had found the most congenial soul on board. The smiling servants flying this way and that, speaking his new language so glibly and with such unexpected intonations that he could not follow it, had installed him in a vast chamber of inconceivable gloom. Its heavy hangings absorbed the glimmer of his candle, vainly reflected by seven mir-

rors with tarnished frames. The polished floor had settled into an inclined plane over which he groped unsteadily ; a clock, representing one of the labors of Hercules, asserted itself boastfully in strident tones ; and the bed, absurdly small, was buried in the darkest corner under a mountain of eider-down. The common articles of furniture were uncommon in their forms. Altogether, the strangeness of the place and its musty chill, upon which a dwarfish fire of apple-boughs had no effect whatever, reminded Tom of a haunted bed-room in a story-book ; so that he slept, half expecting to be roused at midnight by the touch of an icy hand.

The day dawned without adventure, but it found him chillier than ever. The sun struggled hopelessly to burn up a cold fog drifting in from the sea, and at last abandoned the unequal contest. Tom, taking his crust and coffee like a native, was complimented by the wily *valet de chambre* upon the purity of his accent, and with all the enthusiasm of a novice felt that he was already more French than the French themselves. Then descending into the Rue de Paris he became part and parcel of the scene he had looked out upon, and did his best to feel at home there too. It was all just like the books, and all delightfully gay in spite of the weather. How many heroes, heroines, and villains, light and heavy, he saw in that first half-hour ! What was it in all their faces that marked a type so distinctive from the Anglo-Saxon one ? He could not discover. But he did discover very

speedily that he was alone among strangers. If there were but some friend in whom to confide his great enjoyment! If Hal were only here! And then followed that bane of lonely travel, stealing over him like a shadow—a fatal wonder of what they were all doing at home in this same hour; until all his enjoyment was blotted out by it. Alas! their hours and his were the same no longer; at home, they were hardly awake, while his day was well advanced, and he must soon go on with it, out of sight of the sea which was their sea also. This was but a halting-place; and the train for Paris was the *midi-dix*, the porter had told him.

That afternoon the irresistible charm of novelty in all things, great and small, beguiled him into cheerfulness. The sober, drab-lined carriage with its danger-signal under glass: the shrill pipe of the engine like a glorified penny-whistle; the white stations, each with its army of officials, combined to interest and divert his mind. Here was Yvetot of the merry monarch, little known to fame; this cottage with the mildewed thatch might have been his *palais de chaume*; and the hard-featured gate-keeper, holding aloft her wand of office, that very Jeanneton who crowned him. The yellow-covered novel Tom had meant to read dropped from his hand, as the widening landscape, with its hedges and ditches and smooth, rich furrows swept along. Even its colors appealed to him in being softer and less vivid than those at home. Now he could see the turrets of a château rising above the

tree-tops at the end of a stately avenue. Here stood a wayside cross with shrine and emblems ; and there, between rows of poplars, ran the old high-road along which the peasants were trooping home from market—the road to Rouen, into which presently the train rumbled. As it went shrieking out again, Tom's backward glance lingered enviously upon the group of spires—not for the glories of Saint Ouen and Saint Maclou ; since travelling, as a shrewd philosopher has said, gives a return in proportion to the knowledge that a man brings to it ; and of Norman Gothic Tom knew next to nothing. He only remembered that in the market-place Joan of Arc was burned.

Thus far the eight places of the carriage had been all his own ; but at Vernon there burst in upon him a strange female figure, like a print out of Balzac. She was of a certain age, wrinkled, sharp-eyed, and very prim in her rich attire, which was of no fashion that Tom had ever seen ; so that he mentally pronounced her an old maid. In return, she studied him suspiciously, and, apparently led to hope that he was not dangerous, she seated herself in the farthest corner, with much twisting and turning and rustling. As the train moved off, she planted her heels nonchalantly on the opposite cushion, quite as a man would have done ; and then unfolded a daily paper which even Tom knew to be no food for babes. Whereupon he innocently jumped at the conclusion that, whatever her state, she certainly was not single. In any case this in-

discreet pursuit of knowledge could do her little harm ; for in a few moments she dropped into a sound sleep which continued unbroken throughout the journey.

So they left Normandy behind them and came to Maisons-Laffitte, with its pink villas and pavilions between ivy-covered walls. Here all grew suddenly showier and more compact, Parisian in form, though not in substance, as if the city's shadow had fallen on the land and blighted it ; until close beside him Tom saw a fortified hilltop which he knew at once for Mount Valérien ; beyond were lines of roof, gray as the sea and apparently as boundless, with a tall arch and a distant golden dome towering into the smoky air. Then all grew dark, while the train clattered over imposing streets and under them ; lights flashed, hoarse voices shouted. " We have arrived, monsieur," said his parrot-like companion, as she roused herself and smoothed her ruffled plumage. " Paris, Messieurs et Mesdames !" said the guard, flinging open the carriage-door ; and with a courteous smile in Monsieur's direction, Madame alighted, vanishing in the vast kaleidoscope of Paris as swiftly as the sorceress of a fairy-tale.

The Saint Lazare station lies in the heart of all things, and Tom found the drive to his hotel by far too short. The flying city of Laputa could hardly have seemed more wonderful to him. In his mental picture of Paris, formed from hearsay, light and color had counted for nothing because

they cannot be expressed in words. Now, he could see little else. The glowing kiosks and the radiant windows, blurring lines that were already half familiar, bewildered and amazed him ; and these same lines proved in reality far grander and more beautiful than Tom had imagined. He who first sees Paris with the bright eyes of youth is surely to be envied of all mankind. For in the process he acquires unconsciously one of those rich jewels of experience, too few in any life, whose lustre will endure without blemish to the end.

Tom's morning had begun very early, but his afternoon was by no means over ; therefore he resolved to present his letters at once, and to report himself ready for duty. He had been set down in the quarter of the Opera, and the Rue Tronchet, where Mallow & Co. had established their banking-house, could not be far away ; its starting-point, he knew, was that best of landmarks, the church of the Madeleine. Issuing forth into the Rue Louis-le-Grand, he followed it to the Boulevard, along which he sauntered like an old Parisian. It was the "absinthe hour," that witching time of day when the gourmet sits at the door of his favorite café to watch the world go by, and to strengthen his appetite for dinner with insidious liquors ; when the wooden benches on the curb-stone opposite—the free seats of this ever-shifting pageant—have no vacant places. The old women in their glass boxes unfold the evening paper and greet each regular customer with a friendly word. The

advertising pillars display theatre-posters in every conceivable shade of color. The shops blaze with gold, silver, and precious stones, new ornaments and *articles de Paris* just invented. Night is coming on, but it will be brighter than the day. For hours yet, these human shreds and patches will blend here, as they do now, in one harmonious whole that has no shady side. The workman and the noble will touch elbows as they pass on common ground. Poverty will forget to be complaining. Vice will not venture to be brutal. And in this glow of geniality the mighty office of *sergent de ville* sinks to a sinecure; his waxed mustache and martial bearing are but effective factors of the show; the short sword at his belt is only a badge of office, not a weapon.

One of these functionaries, in answer to Tom's appeal, civilly pointed out a short cut to the Rue Tronchet, where Mallow & Co. rented a ground-floor apartment at the back of a handsome court with a fountain splashing from a lion's mask in one of its side walls. A servant in livery showed him into a small room occupied only by a middle-aged man, broad-shouldered and grave, who was turning over a heap of papers on the table before him. He glanced absently at Tom's letter; then rose and came forward with a look of preoccupation.

"Mr. Sylvester?" he inquired.

Tom bowed timidly, and ventured to suppose that this was Mr. Mallow.

"Norman Mallow," he replied, as if to set him right. Then, after a pause, he continued: "I don't see what we are going to do with you."

This was so far from the greeting Tom had expected that he could only stammer: "But I thought—that is, I understood——"

"You must speak with my brother," replied the banker. "But he is not here now. Come in the morning," he added, as if with sudden inspiration; "you will find him then—about ten in the morning."

"Thank you," said Tom. "I will come to-morrow." He desired to say more, but Mr. Norman Mallow, evidently regarding the interruption as ended, was already deep in his papers again. And Tom went back into the streets without another word.

He took a wrong turn, and found himself suddenly emerging into a vast open place across which the carriages and omnibuses dashed at breakneck speed. Over all was a glare of light, and far away on his right hand rows of lamps sparkled through a grove of trees. He had reached the middle of the square before he realized that there lay the Champs-Élysées, and that this was the Place de la Concorde. Here stood the obelisk on its pedestal of golden pictures; and beside him he saw the most beautiful of all fountains, with foaming jets that rose and fell and were tossed back through fishes' throats by colossal tritons in bronze. He sat down upon the edge of the basin, trying to think that he had

found his earthly paradise in which no one had the remotest right to be miserable. But the malady which had been steadily growing all day had now developed its acute stage, and he succumbed to it. He was bitterly homesick. Reason as he might, this peculiar form of mental anguish could not be shaken off; his dearest wish had been fulfilled, he had gained, as it were, the whole world, only to become the most wretched of its creatures.

He might have sat there half the night, but for the perverseness of the autumn wind which veered a little, showering him with spray from the sea-monster overhead. In a fit of profound melancholy he compared this to the wet blanket of the banker's greeting, and shaking himself free of it he made his way back toward the hotel along the bright arcades of the Rue de Rivoli. He often wondered afterward how it was that of this interval he remembered nothing. He walked in a kind of trance, out of which he woke under the hotel-arch, shoulder to shoulder with a big, handsome fellow who almost ran him down in his eagerness to pass. The man excused himself politely in good English, and then stopped with an inarticulate murmur of contentment.

"Sylvester, is this you? Of course it is. I have just left you my card—thought Marmaduke would send you here—delighted to see you. I am Mr. Mallow—Gresham Mallow—the head of the house."

Tom thanked him heartily with rising spirits. Here was one gleam of friendliness, at all events.

"Come along; we'll go and dine somewhere. What luck to find you! I gave Norman the devil for letting you go like that. You mustn't mind him—he's a pessimist. You'd never fancy we were twins, now, would you?"

Though this was the better-favored of the two, a strong family resemblance could be traced between the brothers; but Tom did not insist upon it.

"Where have you been, and what have you seen?" continued this benefactor as they walked toward the Boulevard. "Nothing? Look up, then. That's the Column Vendôme—they have just restored it. This is the Rue de la Paix—finest street in Paris. There's the new Opera—splendid but meretricious—not at all what it might have been. Look out, my boy! *Nom d'un chien!*" And he caught the head of a cab-horse which was about to cut short Tom's career on the spot. The driver rewarded him with a storm of oaths to which he paid no heed, only saying, as he strode off: "They would rather kill you than not, those devils. You remember the cocher's Christmas vision; don't you? '*Encore un bourgeois écrasé!*'"

So ended the trance, and of all that followed on that evening Tom could always summon back the smallest detail. The perfect dinner in the café-window where they sat long over their cigars, while the carriages whirled past and the crowd moved

back and forth under the trees ; the glimpse of the neighboring theatre given over to the wild hilarities of *opéra-bouffe*, at which they arrived so late that the thread of the story was inextricable ; the walk home through streets so much gayer than before that the pleasant improprieties of the play seemed to have overflowed into them ; and, above all, he recalled the face of Gresham Mallow shining always with the same feverish joviality, and growing wider and wider awake as the night advanced. In their talk Tom learned that the brothers were forty-one years old (one-and-forty, Gresham called it), and that Norman had married young ; while his companion had remained single, believing marriage in the long run to be a bit of a bore. "Look at my twin," he argued ; "a jolly good fellow when you come to know him, but he's rusting out. Take my advice, and never trust your happiness to the mercy of a woman. They are not what they are, as the married men find out too late. Good-night, my boy, come to me early to-morrow, and I'll train you up in the way you should go."

He shook Tom's hand warmly ; it was clear that he had taken a fancy to him. And Tom returned his warmth with interest. Mallow & Co. were of the right sort, it appeared. In this happy mood he hailed the concierge and obtained his key. But oddly enough, as he climbed the staircase his exhilaration oozed away. The sight of his trunks with their steamer-labels brought back doubt and

discouragement, and the sense of remoteness from his native land. He had scotched the snake, not killed it. One friend would not suffice. He was horribly alone.

He threw open the window, but saw only new lines of roof, black under the stars. He heard only the tumult of the huge foreign city whose very noise proved incomprehensible to him. He was a cat in a strange garret. He had been twenty-four hours in Europe, and looking back upon them they seemed like a cycle of Cathay.

Part III.

JOYS THREE-PARTS PAIN

CHAPTER I.

THE HEAT OF THE DAY

MORE than two years have passed. And now we find Mr. Sylvester, on a fine winter's day, busy at his desk in that same private office of the Rue Tronchet where he had been received with doubtful cordiality on the night of his arrival in his adopted land. He has gained much in every way by this long interval. He is broader and stouter than he used to be, and his face has acquired not only the twisted mustache which was inevitable, but also a firmness not often seen in one so young ; for Tom, though he looks much older, is not yet twenty-three. Youth, strength, and hope have spurred him forward with that tremendous energy characteristic of his nation, and happily for him, his many good qualities have met with quick appreciation. Out of the ranks he has risen to be *chef de bureau* of the banking-house ; that is to say, the immediate control of its affairs is his. Promoted to a place in the partners' outer room, he has become their confidential clerk, the occasional sharer of their weighty secrets, empowered to represent them in their absence, to consider new enterprises, and to complete those already un-

dine with us at half-past seven, to that end? André will come back for your answer, and that answer must be *yes*. If you have engagements, break them all, as you hope to be saved.

“Yours imperatively,

“UNA VANDERMERE.”

Tom laughed, and wrote at once the desired answer, for which the footman soon presented himself. As he went out there came in by another door a diminutive Frenchman faultlessly dressed, with shaven face and black eyes disagreeably bright. This was the corresponding clerk, Leroux.

“You asked for me,” he said, in a languid, indifferent tone.

“Some time ago,” replied Tom. “You are very late this morning.”

“I am sorry,” said Leroux, changing color. “I was unavoidably detained.”

“It is the second time within a week,” Tom went on. “You must be more careful about this. Do not oblige me to speak again.”

“I will do my best,” answered the other, with irritating calmness.

He was ten years older than Tom, and he would have liked to make a sharp retort. But he prudently said no more.

Tom immediately changed the subject, and began to dictate letters, of which Leroux took notes. They were still occupied in this way when Nor-

man Mallow appeared, bidding them good-morning and then absorbing himself completely in the papers which Tom handed him.

He was a man who listened much, never brilliant, but always undemonstrative. Yet he could speak straight to the point with great brusqueness when he thought occasion required it. His place, however, was distinctly secondary, since he deferred in everything to his brother, the head of the house. He had made upon Tom, at first, a disagreeable impression long since modified; for his honesty and sturdy directness, when once understood, commanded respect. His marked failing, as the twin brother often told him, was a want of ambition. He lived in a rut which he was content to follow, leaving for others the joy in the conflict and the honor and profit of its reward.

"Leroux was late again this morning, wasn't he?" Mr. Mallow asked as the clerk left the room.

"Yes," said Tom. "How did you know?"

"I saw him in the Rue Lafayette as I came along."

"The Rue Lafayette? Then I believe what they say of him is true."

"What's that?"

"That he has an office there, where he carries on some business of his own. What is to be done about it?"

"Give him fair warning and discharge him if he

persists. No man can serve two masters. Anything from London?"

"No," said Tom. "I don't understand it. Marmaduke should have written."

He had hardly spoken when Marmaduke himself appeared, looking fresh and rosy notwithstanding his tiresome night passage of the Channel. "Touching the matter of the Turks," he explained, "I thought there should be a conference. When in doubt confer, and as the mountain wouldn't come to Mahomet, Mahomet, meaning me, comes to Gresham, meaning the mountain. By the way, what keeps Gresham here so long, in the devil's name? He seems to have adopted Paris. I hope he isn't entangled with a woman."

"I advise you to ask him," said Norman, curtly.

"Thank you; but I discuss with no man the relation of the sexes. Therein the patient must minister to himself. Tom, you old Puritan, we need money in our London purse. How much did you send us yesterday?"

Gresham's arrival led to a long and animated argument upon the firm's investments and to its future course regarding the stock of certain Turkish railways which had fallen several points within the last few days. Though the house held many of these shares, Gresham felt no uneasiness, but had reason to think the decline a temporary one; and in this view Marmaduke inclined to agree. Norman, on the other hand, was cautious and con-

servative, recommending the immediate sale of the stock with a blunt declaration that he was tired of risks, too many of which had been run already. Tom worked on, taking no part in this talk. Breakfast-time found the matter still undecided, and the three went off to their café to discuss it further.

Now came that piping time of peace which occurs always in the day of a Frenchman, whatever may be his condition, and which perhaps does more than anything else to make him light-hearted and long-lived. The day-laborer is allowed a proper digestive interval, the world over, even in our own restless land; and the man of leisure, of course, continues leisurely in that; but with the intermediate majority of the Anglo-Saxon race all is rush and hurry from the rising to the setting of the sun. Tom had always found blessed relief in this lull of an hour or more when business practically ceases, and Paris by common consent sits down to breakfast tranquilly; though with mistaken zeal he often refrained from taking the full advantage of it. To-day his morning had gone he knew not where; he had fifty things to do, and pitched into them, as he would have expressed it, with a will. All was very quiet in the great office, where Strong, the cashier, a middle-aged Englishman of much good sense, sat within his gilded wire cage breakfasting *in situ*. As Tom made his round an imposing bank messenger, wearing a cocked hat, with a portfolio attached to

him by a steel chain, presented some checks for payment.

"How much is that, Strong?" Tom inquired.

"Ten thousand. They are pulling out to-day."

"What can we give London?"

"Not a sou."

"And nothing yesterday. That's bad; they want money."

Strong shrugged his shoulders and went back to his *petits pois* and his *filet*. He was far too good a soldier to offer unsolicited advice.

"A gentleman asks for you," said the boy Alfred, handing Tom a card, upon which he read a name unknown to him: Mr. John Barclay, of Halifax, Nova Scotia. Tom, vexed at the interruption, confounded all strangers and this one in particular, as he returned to the private office where the gentleman was waiting.

But Mr. Barclay's agreeable presence turned the scale at once, prejudicing Tom in his favor; and his business proved to be of a gratifying kind. He was a handsome man, still young, with frank blue eyes, a ruddy face, and brown beard neatly trimmed. His dress and manner indicated that he could bear without abuse the title which the boy had applied; in speech he was very clear and concise, requiring no cross-examination to bring out his point. He professed to be one of the owners of a large gypsum quarry in the Acadian province. The mineral was of so fine a quality and could be so easily worked that it had met with a profitable

sale even in France, where it might seem more of a drug in the market than coals at Newcastle. The first shipment had already been exhausted, while another on the water was sold to arrive. He, representing the owners, found himself in possession of a large sum, and wished to open a bank account upon which he should draw from time to time. He did not demand interest; his chief desire was to get rid of the money.

"How large is the sum?" Tom asked.

And Mr. Barclay modestly corrected himself by saying that the amount, after all, was not one of much importance to a banker, and then, putting his hand into his pocket, tossed down upon the desk between them the equivalent of £7,000. There was a small bag of English gold, with several hundred in Bank of England notes, but the greater part of the money was represented by the acceptances of a well-known firm whose signatures Tom recognized. He examined these documents critically, and, finding them in order, accepted the account without hesitation. The attendant formalities were soon despatched, and the two parted upon the best of terms and in the best of humor.

Tom rang his bell.

"Has Giraud gone to the Bourse?" he inquired.

"Le voici, monsieur." And Giraud presently appeared, to await orders at a respectful distance. He was an old fellow of fifty, the Parisian under-

ling of commerce in its finest type, precise in his dress, prim and pompous in his manner, which had nevertheless the kind of well-bred servility that is not displeasing. The interests of the house were his first interests, and in word and deed he was absolutely faithful.

"Buy £5,000 on London, Giraud," said Tom. "Do your best."

"Bien, monsieur," replied the clerk; and with an unconscious smile, he departed briskly. The caution was needless, as Tom might well have known.

When the partners returned, their conference was over; and Tom soon divined that Gresham and Marmaduke had carried the point. Their consequent exhilaration was not diminished by the news of Tom's remittance to London.

"There, Norman, what do you say to that?" his brother asked. "We never want money that we don't get it. Demand creates supply; it's one of Nature's laws."

"Where did you learn so much?" growled Norman, in return.

"Not from you," said Gresham, laughing. "Call it my luck, then, if you like that better. I am a man with a star. Who can doubt it that has watched our business grow?"

"Stars be cursed!" replied Norman, irreverently. "They fall sometimes—yes, and strike too. Pray who is John Barclay, and why should he bring us his money? I don't like large accounts. He may change his mind to-morrow."

"Well, if he does, refer him to me," retorted Gresham ; and as Norman by his silence acknowledged himself beaten, if not convinced, his brother turned to Marmaduke, and, on the plea of forwarding other important schemes by a quiet talk, asked him to take a drive in the Bois. This was quite in accordance with his way of life. As the brain of the establishment he could not concern himself with details which were always left to his plodding brother and his subordinates—the patient, willing hands of the machine. Marmaduke delayed a moment to invite Tom to dine with him that night at Voisin's. But Tom's evening was already taken up, and he declined the invitation. Then the two went out together, telling each other stories that left the court ringing with their laughter.

"Mark my words, Tom, our brain-power will be the death of us some day," said Norman, when they were gone. At another time Tom, perhaps, would have agreed with him, but he was young enough to have very hopeful and buoyant moods, of which the present was one ; and he took the opposite ground very strongly.

"Gresham has a clear head," he argued ; "and he's a born leader. He has made us what we are. Let him alone, and he'll prove right nine times in ten, I believe."

"He'll prove black is white like winking," Norman returned.

"Well, it was white the other day," asserted Tom, recalling a former difference of opinion in

which Norman had been discomfited and ultimately forced to admit his error. So, gradually the latter's doubt was dispelled, and the unbounded admiration for his brother, which he often felt and always longed to feel, came uppermost. The work went on, while these drones of the hive did their best to keep up with it, but were still behindhand when the *frotteurs* came, in the dusk, with their brushes and bandaged feet to polish the shining floor: when the brain-power and his merry associate, after driving six times over the length of the Allée de Longchamp, had descended at the Cascade to sip a glass of absinthe and watch the *grand monde* and the *demi-monde* whirling cityward.

CHAPTER II.

THE NOON OF NIGHT

THE American minister, Lawrence Vandermere, occupied the whole of a small house, or hôtel, to speak correctly after the Parisian manner, in the Avenue Marigny. This is equivalent to saying that he was, as every ambitious diplomatist must be, a man of independent fortune. He had been born with a golden spoon, and, from birth to middle age, circumstances might be said to have grouped themselves around him systematically for his success. Even the share of misfortune deemed essential to a perfect character in the days of fairy godmothers had not been withheld, for just as complete earthly happiness seemed to be within easy reach, if not already in his hand, his wife, stricken with an insidious malady, had slowly faded before his eyes, to die at last, when their only child, a daughter, stood most in need of her. The mother had been high-bred, cultivated, brilliant, and withal somewhat worldly minded—an excellent match for him, as everybody said when they were married, since worldliness was by no means lacking in his nature. All that a full purse, a free hand,

a keen intelligence, good looks, good manners, and almost unerring tact could do for him was done and well done. But underneath it all lay a flint-like personality that he never quite forgot. He could assume geniality very cleverly upon occasion; yet his warm friends (and he had many who valued him highly) would not have called him genial. And though he was fond of his daughter, even she detected this hardness in him, and fearing him on account of it, could not truthfully have said that he was expansive in his affection. Yet he had always shown for her a reckless indulgence which she repaid with devotion of a peculiar kind that had much of family pride in it. They were of Dutch extraction and the last of their race, inheriting that least precious of all baubles in America, an escutcheon. A fear had been openly expressed that their life abroad would be marked by a reserve distasteful to their countrymen. But those who feared this reckoned without their host, who grasped the situation as resolutely as they grasped his hand on the nights when, to their intense joy, he was at home to everybody. A born patrician, Lawrence Vandermere had the art of paying court to the people literally at his fingers' ends; and, whatever her own feelings may have been, his daughter, without remonstrance, conformed to his convictions.

The house in the Avenue Marigny was a pleasant one to visit under all conditions, and Tom rarely lost an opportunity of going there. To-

night, for the first time, he found himself the only guest, and the only member of the family in the drawing-room when he entered it was Mademoiselle de Champfleury, Miss Vandermere's companion. She was none other than the little old woman who had journeyed with him into Paris on the memorable day of his arrival. Upon their formal introduction, some months afterward, he had remembered her instantly, and had recalled to her the circumstances of that companionship, which, naturally enough, she had entirely forgotten. And seeing at once that she was the fortunate possessor of a keen sense of humor, he had even ventured to chaff her about the obvious fear of him which she had displayed upon entering the railway-carriage.

"Don't flatter yourself," she had replied, in harsh and queerly accented speech, that served to make perfect her affinity with the parrot kind. "It was not fear, but hate. I hate you all, you men. I dare say you think I am very plain, don't you?"

"Not at all," said Tom.

"Dear soul, how gracefully he pays compliments," she retorted. "Plain as you know I am, I could have married a dozen of you in my younger days. The odious wretches!"

"I suppose there are degrees in badness," observed Tom, meekly.

"Yes, dear, so there are; and the older you grow the worse you'll be. It's a pity, too," she added, reflectively.

"I don't see what can be done about it," said Tom, laughing; and thereupon she had joined in the laugh, and they had become fast friends.

She displayed an odd vanity in her dress, which always had the air of consideration; always, too, it was of a fashion either long out of date or yet to come. To-night she wore steel gray silk so heavy that it would have stood alone.

"To match my domino," she explained, as Tom's eyes expressed his wonder. "How do you like it, excellent Saint Thomas?"

"I have nothing to suggest," he said, in good faith; and she, less sceptical than usual, put upon his word its most favorable construction.

"It needs a rose, I think," said she, taking one from a slender glass upon the table, to try the effect. She decided that it would do, and pinned the flower into her corsage.

"C'est parfait!" cried Tom, as she smoothed and re-arranged its leaves.

"Be careful!" said a quiet voice behind him. "What have you left to say of me?"

"Plus que parfait!" he replied promptly, to the speaker's other self in the large mirror on the wall before him.

"Good! One thing was left," returned the shape, with a smile, as Tom turned to justify his admiration.

She was all in black, which suited her, as it does all women. Her beauty, though not of the radiant sort, was yet sufficiently apparent to make one look

again to discover, if possible, in what it consisted: upon the whole, a beauty of style rather than of feature, although her gray eyes were large and fine. In complexion she could be called neither fair nor dark; in figure she was slender and decidedly too tall, but she carried herself superbly with a piquant air peculiarly her own, that might be described as the air of a sovereign beginning to be tired of her rightful homage, but endeavoring to conceal the ungrateful thought. Her face in repose had a worn look, heightening this effect of *ennui*; but it all vanished with her smile, which was of unaffected sweetness. She must have been older than Tom by nearly three years, and she looked even older than her age.

"What does it matter to-night?" she went on. "One might as well wear sackcloth and ashes, since we must go masked. You men who are permitted to show your faces have, as usual, all the advantage."

"That's a queer view to take of it," Tom rejoined. "The advantage is certainly yours. Noblesse oblige! We, in our own characters, are forced into good behavior."

"And we?" asked Mademoiselle de Champfleury. "Pray, sir, what do you imagine we are going to do? We shall not leave our box, if I have anything to say about it; we shall blush unseen, in the most proper manner, only as spectators."

"Spectres, you mean," said Miss Vandermere.

"The mummies at the feast, of course. Papa thinks even that too great a privilege."

The father came in just as dinner was announced. Tom admired him, but stood aloof from him too, feeling that his mind must always be preoccupied with affairs of state. The acquaintance of an elderly man with a younger one often seems to begin at the beginning each time they meet; they move in different orbits, and only a mighty effort can over-set the natural order of things. Such an effort Mr. Vandermere made to-night with signal success; so that Tom, who rarely did anything but agree with him, astonished himself by developing a fluent ease, as they smoked together after dinner with the port between them. Their light talk bubbled on, and the minister's spirits rose with it. He told story after story, while Tom leaned back, envying him his wealth, his power, and his distinction. What did he lack except the youth he had replaced with something far more valuable—a knowledge of the world? He had arrived; he was sure of himself. "He's wonderfully young, too: he must be all of fifty!" thought the boy, to whom forty loomed up as the far-off age where dotage began. The truth being that his host, with nothing better to do, had amused himself in making a little experiment. He was trying his best to be a boy again; and Tom's altered demeanor soon showed him that the feat had been accomplished to the satisfaction of both. His own thin, sallow face glowed with a momentary color when they rose to

go back to the drawing-room ; he noted this in the glass, and gave a twist to his mustache, into which the color could never be recalled even for a moment. "Not dead yet!" he thought, laying his hand gently upon Tom's shoulder, to make him take the lead. Then he hummed a stave of *Le Roi Dagobert* as they went in, boys together.

Their companions were already unrecognizable. Mam'zelle, masked in the usual way, fluttered about like a gray night-moth, and now seemed the younger of the two. But even the black domino's loose folds could not fall as they did on any but a graceful woman. Had it been sackcloth, indeed, Miss Vandermere's charm would have found some way to assert itself ; and, instead of a mask, her maid brought in a piece of Spanish lace, which she bound about her face, disguising it, yet permitting her smile to shine through whenever she chose to lower the fan she carried as a weapon of defence. "I thought you were never coming," she said, reproachfully. "We are late."

"We shall get enough of it," returned her father, to whom the opera-ball was no novelty. "Ten to one you'll be bored to death in an hour."

Their carriage whirled up the Boulevard, where all was bright as day. Masks leaned out from other carriages, and men and women, on foot, in costumes wildly eccentric, were all tending one way—to the old opera-house in the rue Le Peletier, where the last Napoleon so narrowly escaped Sedan and all that followed it, years before his time,

at the hands of Orsini. Then their horses were checked, and went on in the line at a snail's pace, turning the corner between the sentinel *chasseurs d'Afrique*, splendidly mounted, statuesque in their rigidity. Halting finally at the great doors, they were forced to run the gauntlet of a troop of *gamins*, and then to undergo the more formal scrutiny of the officials, by whom they were passed like merchandise from hand to hand. The last of these, pompous as a court chamberlain, flung open the box-door with a low reverence; and, passing through the dark ante-chamber, they stood still for a moment, dazzled by the suddenly contrasted glare and the bewildering effect of light and color in the frantic carnival-feast spread out before them.

They were at the back of the theatre and in the grand tier, but a few feet above the temporary flooring laid down over pit and stalls at the stage-level to make the entire space before and behind the proscenium arch available for dancers. At its opposite limit could be discerned the conductor of the orchestra, aloft upon his perch and bristling with excitement, as he urged his men forward through the waltz, which, admirably played, rang out to the remotest corner above all the petty tumults of the half-indifferent throng. Whirled this way and that, in glittering entanglement, which the eye tried vainly to unravel, were the tinsel shapes of the masquerade: the gods and goddesses, clowns and pantaloons, pages, priests, demons, in red and yellow, purple, green, and gold—

every imaginable shade of every color, with barbaric disregard of all the rest. And threading their way among these animated leaders of the revel, moved sober spectators of a higher caste; the men, unmasked, in evening dress, wearing their hats pressed down upon their brows—turning, now and then, for a reassuring word to the closely hooded female figures who clung to them somewhat timorously. For, in truth, the floor was over-crowded, and to force its passage when the waltz was at its height had become no comfortable matter. The *pierrots* shouted and grimaced, and the zanies belabored them with straw clubs or inflated bladders. The note of merriment was easily struck and easily sustained: even the roughest jokes being taken, as they were given, with hearty good-humor; and though the fun grew fast and furious, there was no disorder in it. Its effect was heightened by the stately lines and fine proportions of the historic play-house, by the richness of the faded crimson and tarnished gilding of the boxes, which were filling up one by one with little groups of maskers, in domino for the most part, content to form a background by no means unimpressive. For whether they looked down with languid curiosity or busied themselves with quiet intrigue of their own, they were still a part of the show, an interest always in reserve. Jewels flashed among them; their trailing garments gleamed and rustled; each new arrival was a new excitement; and

the crowd below became every moment denser and denser.

"It is just as I remember it," said Mademoiselle de Champfleury, sighing at this intrusion of the past upon the present. "Even better. To think that I haven't seen a sight like this for twenty years!"

"What a strange dress!" said Miss Vandermere, in the recovery from her first bewilderment now able to distinguish details, indicating as she spoke a man in so-called *bébé* costume, with short, full skirts, a child's cap and rattle. "And look at that bacchante! Do you suppose she has really been drinking?"

The girl, whose handsome face was plastered with powder and rouge, wore a leopard-skin clasped about one shoulder and a vine-wreath set awry upon her dishevelled hair. She reeled forward unsteadily, gave a wild cry, and, flinging her arms about the *bébé*, whisked him away in the waltz, gracefully, with perfect self-possession.

"A bit of acting, voilà tout!" decided Mam'zelle. "Who's that handsome creature in swan's down?" she asked of Mr. Vandermere, who had taken a chair at her side.

"Alixé Duvernil, of the Variétés. That face has made her fortune and the manager's; she cannot speak a line correctly."

"Her dress is scandalous," Mam'zelle replied, moving her glass another way.

"Hardly worth considering, I think," said Mr.

Vandermere. "But I am in your hands. We will go, if you think best."

"Go, when we have just come?" she returned, laying down the glass and leaning back in an attitude of repose. "Oh, dear, no!" Then she added, in an undertone: "To Una this is no more than the ballet we saw last week; and as for me, I am emancipated. Time has looked out for that. It is the privilege of old age to read between the lines."

He laughed. "I think the book is too dull to hurt even our young Puritan. But we must not stay too late. I give you an hour longer; you won't mind my passing a part of it in the foyer?"

"On the contrary. Pray go, and tell us who is there, and what you see."

So he went away, to the relief of the others; for he had grown old again in the last half hour, and the consciousness that he but tolerated what they enjoyed oppressed them. They laughed and talked freely for some time—Tom, especially, finding the scene before him curious and exciting: so much so, in fact, that he privately determined to see it out, whatever became of the others. After a while Miss Vandermere complained of the heat, and, withdrawing into the back of the box, unbound her veil; then drew off her gloves and began to pull them thoughtfully into shape—an occupation which she seemed to find absorbing. Tom, talking on with *Mademoiselle de Champfleury*, turned to

assure himself that Una's face could not be seen from below, and became equally absorbed in her and in what she was doing. She had more color than usual, and had never looked so well, he thought; that black robe was most becoming. How white her hands were! They needed no jewels, which she never wore: there was only one plain gold ring, and he could not remember seeing her before with that. Then he noticed that she was absolutely silent. Was she ill? he wondered. No, only abstracted. Her mind had wandered off to something which annoyed her, which now annoyed him too. He must bring it back. And speaking to her with that intent, he so startled her that she dropped not only the gloves, but her fan with them; they fell to the floor, together. She stooped, laughing at her awkwardness; and he went down upon all-fours at once, groping to pick them up. As he did so, something flashed in the darkness. The ring had turned upon her hand, revealing a diamond she had worn concealed. She could not know that he had seen it; she did not betray the smallest shade of that suspicion. The ring was a plain gold one, when he stood up again, holding the fan while she drew on the gloves, laughing and thanking him, quite herself once more. It was a trifling circumstance, but his mind persisted in dwelling upon it with that odd perplexity which often attaches itself unduly to a trifling thing.

"Una, my child, pray put on your veil," said

Mam'zelle, appealingly. "If somebody should see you!"

She had hardly accomplished this when her father reappeared.

"Well, shall we go?" said he.

"Oh, papa, a little longer. May we not go down upon the floor for just a moment? Please!"

Mr. Vandermere shook his head; but his silence implied a doubt. "What does Mademoiselle say?" he asked.

Mademoiselle desired nothing better, but she dissembled with great discretion.

"A moment might do no harm," she admitted.

"Allons-y. Une petite promenade, tout petite—tout petite!"

She took Mr. Vandermere's arm, while Tom gave Una his. The girl shrank from the crowd as they came out into it, and clung closely to Tom's sleeve while they hurried down the great staircase directly behind her father, who turned his head at short intervals to make sure that they were following. But after they were fairly out upon the floor she became more composed or more abstracted, he could not quite tell which; her face was not to be seen, of course, and she said very little. Tom thought the effect of the ball from this point even finer than the former one, and he remarked upon it. She agreed in a word or two, and then relapsed into silence. There had come a pause in the dance, and, following Mr. Vandermere's lead, they moved on toward the stage in slow progress,

which, owing to the crowd, required care and thought on Tom's part. He was silent too, until his companion spoke again.

"Thirty-eight — forty," she said, reflectively. "Forty, it must be." Obviously, she was thinking aloud.

He looked at her in surprise. "Forty?" he said, inquiringly.

"No matter," she returned, with a laugh. Then, as if desiring to change the subject, and choosing the first that occurred to her, she continued: "Is not that the actress, Duvernill—there, in the lower box?"

"The swan's-down woman — yes," said Tom, recognizing the costume which Mam'zelle thought scandalous and Mr. Vandermere hardly worth considering.

The woman, unmasked and radiant in her audacious beauty, sat in the front of the box, laughing boisterously in a way well calculated to attract the attention it was evident she courted. At that moment she had succeeded in making herself the most conspicuous figure in the house. She had but one companion, a tall, handsome Frenchman, with beard trimmed in Napoleonic fashion, who leaned over her chair talking vivaciously and playing with her fan.

"It is she," Tom repeated, as Miss Vandermere did not speak. "It is she. What of her?"

"Nothing; let us go on."

But with a sudden burst of music a horde of

waltzers bore down upon them. They were pushed aside, and after one vain struggle forced to take refuge blindly upon a flight of steps leading to the corridor. The others of their party had been swept away in like manner, where, it was impossible to say. Tom, doing his best to discover this, saw only waves of color in which all individuality was lost.

"It is of no use," he said. "We are stranded."

"What does it matter?" she replied, indifferently. "We could not help it. Let us go back to the box; this way."

She drew him out into the corridor, which was only a little less crowded, but chiefly with the domino-people, going and coming between the boxes and the foyer. Notwithstanding her calm speech, Tom saw that she was disturbed, and could feel that she was trembling. He hurried on without speaking, when suddenly she stopped.

"Let us wait a moment," said she; "here—against the wall. Will you hold my fan, please?" Then she drew the glove from her left hand, and gave him that too. The diamond had turned upmost again; but there was no further attempt on her part to conceal it.

"You can do me a great service," she went on, now taking off the ring thoughtfully, as if her words referred to that. "Will you?"

"Of course," he answered, promptly. "What must I do?"

She hesitated, as though the favor were some-

thing fearful to be asked; then, apparently with a sudden change of purpose, and whispering: "Wait for me here — that's all!" she darted away into the crowd.

He was taken by surprise, and, unable to reason with her or to detain her, could only stand still, following her with his eyes. To his relief, she stopped in a moment, a few yards off, on the farther side, at the closed door of a box, numbered forty. Here she knocked, and the door was immediately opened by the tall Frenchman whom they had just seen with the actress Duvernill. Without a word Miss Vandermere stood motionless before him, holding out the ring in her gloved hand. Of this gesture the man took no notice. His eyes were fixed upon her veiled face with a questioning look; his lips moved; evidently he asked the question. But she, recoiling, flung the ring across the threshold at his feet and slipped back among the maskers. Then he understood, and his face flushed angrily; for a second he looked ready to spring after her. But one or two bystanders were already eying him with amusement. He observed this in time to prevent a scene, and with a muttered oath he shut the door upon them and disappeared.

Miss Vandermere had turned the wrong way in her excitement, and had been carried far along toward the foyer before Tom could overtake her. She caught his arm with a grateful exclamation, and they drew aside from the crush into the first

doorway leading to the theatre. From this point Tom saw at a glance that their companions had returned to the box in an anxious frame of mind ; for while he looked, Mr. Vandermere scanned the house nervously through his glass, then, dropping it, leaned over the rail and peered into the throng with straining eyes.

"They want us," said Tom. "We must go back instantly." But this was easier to say than to do. Directly in front a crowd was collecting around two men, who had chosen the unseasonable time and place for the issue of a quarrel. The spectators swayed this way and that with much gesticulation, while the disputants grappled each other and fell back against one of the lights, breaking the glass with a crash and extinguishing the flame. It was impossible to pass, and Miss Vandermere implored Tom to turn for a moment into the foyer.

There were tears in her voice, if not in the eyes he could not see. But the foyer was comparatively quiet, and, after walking two or three times the length of it, she appeared to be at her ease again. Tom, however, grew more and more uncomfortable amid the brazen effrontery of the place. No startling costumes were to be seen there, it is true ; the women were all in domino, the dress most favorable to the reckless freedom of manner which the men, with one accord, assumed must be theirs. The fun was high-pitched, and had an intimate, personal flavor. Moreover, some of the men were

Americans, whom he knew by sight, frequenters of the minister's house. They stared unpleasantly at him and his companion. This was no place for Miss Vandermere, he told himself; to stay there longer would be unfair to her, to them, to him. He hurried back into the crowd without saying by your leave, in time to see the combatants parted and dragged away by the police. Half stifled, they pushed on, and at length struggled out into the shelter of their box, where a storm awaited them.

Mademoiselle de Champfleury sat unmasked, white and cold, the picture of dismay. Mr. Vandermere, livid with rage, found speech at first impossible.

"What, in heaven's name, have you been doing?" he finally demanded.

"Papa, we couldn't help it," Una pleaded.

"Stuff and nonsense! What do you mean?"

Tom tried to explain; but he refused to listen.

"You are much to blame," said he.

"No, papa, it was my fault," Miss Vandermere asserted, facing him, unveiled, as she spoke. Tom was right: she had been crying; yet now she met her father's eye without flinching, very pale, but calm and tearless.

"Where have you been?" he asked her in a gentler voice.

"We could not get back; we went into the foyer."

At this word his wrath broke out afresh. "The

foyer, of all places !” he cried, savagely. “You couldn’t have done worse.”

“You went there,” she returned, inconsequently. “Why shouldn’t we ?”

“That has nothing to do with it,” he insisted. “I am ashamed of you. You are old enough to know better. And you—— !” he added, turning again to Tom.

The girl bit her lip, and made no reply.

“I am very sorry——” Tom began ; but he stopped short when Mam’zelle gave his hand a warning pressure. “You will only make him worse,” she whispered. “Una, dear, put on your veil. It is time to go home.”

“I should say it was,” growled Mr. Vandermere, setting, as it were, his seal upon the conversation. They went down to the carriage in painful silence. Mam’zelle urged Tom to get in with them. But he murmured an excuse ; and Mr. Vandermere, who had been let alone long enough to have a gleam of returning reason, somewhat to his surprise, bade him good-night courteously.

They were gone. And Tom, left alone, pondered over what had passed, but failed to see how he could have acted otherwise. He determined to forget the matter, and, going back into the theatre, wandered dolefully among the masks without forgetting it at all. He resolved to go home, and was already making for the door, when he was stopped by his cousin Marmaduke, and a moment later by their corresponding clerk, Leroux.

“Tommy, you look like a first-class funeral,” declared Marmaduke. “What’s the matter? Does the carnival depress you?”

“Not a bit of it,” said Tom. “Come up into my box; we can see better there.”

“The very thing! I am astray, like the dove, with no rest for my weary feet. If you have an ark, let us make the most of it.”

They went up accordingly, and Leroux, whom Tom did not like, but whom he was forced to invite, went with them. “In the grand tier, too,” said Marmaduke, laughing. “Upon my soul, when your New Englander does get loose, he just goes it. What do you think Grip, for instance, would say to this?” And he picked up Miss Vandermere’s glove, which had dropped unnoticed in their hurried departure.

“Don’t be absurd!” replied Tom, snatching the glove with a conscious look, in which appeared some measure of that odd gratification a very young man is apt to feel at being taken for a *roué*. “The box isn’t mine. I am only a guest in it.”

“Oh, you needn’t explain,” continued Marmaduke, lightly. “Explanations, like apologies, only make things worse. They are rarely believed. I say, Leroux, isn’t that Duvernail on the right? There’s a costume for you!”

“C’est épatant!” murmured Leroux, as he brought his glass to bear upon it. “She is divine.”

“Who is the man with her?” asked Tom, suddenly interested.

"The Baron Honoré de Rozières."

"And who is he?"

Leroux shrugged his shoulders. "How shall I tell you? He is de Rozières—voilà tout! A bon diable, who is running through his estates like a fast express. He has an American in his eye, they tell me—your minister's daughter."

"Indeed!" said Tom. "He will do better, then, to fix his eyes elsewhere."

"Who can say that? He has good looks, good manners, a good title."

"He is old enough to be her father."

"So much the better. He is the more likely—how do you say it?—to arrange himself after marriage."

"She will never have him," said Tom, emphatically.

"Eh, what's that?" Marmaduke broke in. "What do you know about it?"

"Nothing at all," Tom said, indifferently. "I spoke on general principles."

The night was now well advanced, and those who remained upon the floor found their movements no longer impeded. The dance gained, in consequence. Many taking part in it were professionals, whom it was interesting to watch, whose names Leroux mentioned from time to time. A woman in page's costume looked up at him, and tossed a bunch of violets into his face. He made a swoop for her, and, catching her wrist, dragged her toward him, then whispered some-

thing, at which she smiled and remained to talk about it in an undertone.

Tom turned to Marmaduke, who was yawning. "Stupid show, isn't it?" said he. "Tom, let's go to supper somewhere. Three o'clock; the fun here is about over."

Tom's spirits had revived, and he declared himself ready for any fresh excitement.

"Leroux, are you coming?" asked Marmaduke, as they rose. "Oh, no, I see you're occupied."

"Only talking politics," explained Leroux, releasing his prey. "I am with you. But wait a minute. They are going to clear the house; that's worth seeing."

The last waltz had been played; but the persistent leaders of the revel still lingered, unwilling to make an end. A bugle sounded; and at the signal a file of soldiers with fixed bayonets drew up in solid phalanx at the back of the theatre. The conductor rapped attention; then, with a will, his men took up that air of Offenbach, wild among the wildest—the can-can of Olympus, from the second act of the *Orphée*. Shouts of delight broke from the masks, who swung into the dance with redoubled fury, and the soldiers charged upon it, driving all before them dancing to the very doors.

"C'est le galop infernal!" said Leroux. "Al-lons! il le faut bien; the ball is finished now by force of arms."

They went down the Boulevard, with life all around them still at its heyday, and, turning into

a café, possessed themselves of a comfortable corner. The place soon filled with maskers, some of them boisterous, but all brimming over with good nature. Marmaduke ordered supper, and they lingered long over the wine-cups, idly watching the other groups, in which Leroux took a more active interest, going off occasionally to resume an old acquaintance or to begin a new one.

"Tom," said his cousin, suddenly, during one of these intervals, "have you ever seen your father?"

"Never. Why do you ask? Do you know where he is?"

"No. The thought occurred to me that, supposing him to be still in Paris, this is the kind of place he would turn up in."

"He may be here at this moment," said Tom, sighing. "You forget that I do not know him by sight."

"All the better. You are spared the problem."

"What problem?"

"That of steering a straight course with such a meeting forced upon you."

"I wish all problems were as easy, Marmaduke. When that happens I shall speak to my father without the smallest hesitation. Why do you smile?"

"Because he would undoubtedly save you trouble by speaking first. You would be to him a new bank of supply, inexhaustible in its resources, furnished with the family name."

"I am not so rich that such a fear need worry me," Tom returned. "If he ever wants my help, he shall have all that I can give him. I think my name entitles him to that."

" 'O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?'
'Deny thy father, and refuse thy name,'

Marmaduke quoted.

"You met him once, Grip told me. What did you do then?"

"Do? I cut him dead; and so must you. Take my advice, and stick to the wide berth and the cold shoulder. He is a miserable vagabond."

"Yes," said Tom, "and he is my father too."

Marmaduke changed the subject, then took a cigar, and they relapsed into silence. The merriment grew more and more uproarious; but its interest for Tom was gone now. Grave thoughts intruded themselves upon him. Somewhere in this pleasure-seeking city the father, whom he was powerless to help, might be at this moment in want, or sick—or dying, even. His namesake could not look precisely as others did upon his misdeeds. They were so remote, to begin with, that only the faint shadow of their disgrace had ever touched him. And all that might have changed now; if not, some force might still be found strong enough to save him. Could the man have sunk too low even for that? "The man!" So Grip had called him, and here was Tom's own

thought taking the same form unconsciously. Thus with his romantic, youthful hopes, strange doubts and fears and painful memories were mingled, clouding his mind and smarting there like the tobacco-smoke in his eyes. He must get out of this brutal place; he could not bear it longer. Just then came a great noise from the opposite corner, where, amid much shouting and applause, a young girl jumped upon the table. Tom recognized the bacchante of the ball, her vine-leaves trailing, her leopard-skin half torn off. She tossed a wine-glass up, and caught it, then began to sing, in strident tones:

“ Le Roi Dagobert
A mis ses culottes à l'envers.
Mon beau Saint Eloi
Lui dit : ‘ Mon beau roi,
Votre majesté
Est fort mal culotté ! ’
‘ C’est vrai,’ lui dit le roi,
‘ Je m’en vais les mettre à l’endroit ! ’ ”

It was the very song that Mr. Vandermere had hummed after dinner. Into what a scrape he had been drawn after that! Another disagreeable recollection!

“ Bis! Bis!” shouted Leroux, rejoining them.

Tom started up. “ I am going,” he said.

“ Good-night, Don Quixote!” replied Marma-
duke, who showed no disposition to move. Leroux dropped into the chair which Tom had left

vacant, and, drawing back the window-curtain, let in the first pale gleam of dawn.

"No, it is good-day," said he.

And as Tom walked alone through the gray streets, there were the scavengers already at work, removing the *débris* of the gay Saturday night, in preparation for a gayer Sunday morning.

CHAPTER III.

GOOD NEWS FROM HOME

“**D**EAR TOM : I’m engaged to Cora Merrifield ! And perhaps there is a happier man than I am in the world, but it isn’t likely. If you don’t believe me, go and do likewise. I would write more, but can’t collect my thoughts. You, my dear fellow, are the only man who knows it yet. Cora sends love.

“Sincerely and distractedly your old friend,

“H. RODNEY.”

“P. S. We are to be married in the summer, and I am going into business in New York with her big brother. ‘Merrifield & Rodney, Bankers,’ is the sign which is to make our everlasting fortunes. Isn’t it prime ?”

The engagement of an intimate friend invariably brings heaviness to the heart of a single man. The happy lover has been translated into a higher state, in which the poor survivor cannot share ; and the greater the sense of happiness of the one, the greater the other’s sense of loss must be. Tom dropped the letter with a sigh. So Hal was gone.

The event had nothing very surprising in it, and though his choice left something to be desired, since Cora Merrifield was not half good enough for him, to express any feeling but one of joy as unreasoning as his own would be unfriendly and disloyal. Friendship must yield to love, of course ; its only resource being, as Hal said, to go and do likewise.

Tom's next letter was from his brother Grip, and, when he opened it, out dropped an enclosure in Jane's handwriting, which, to his amazement, ran thus :

"DEAR TOM: Guy has told you of the unexpected happiness that has come to me. It is a great grief to me that you will not be here at the wedding. I hope you are not forgetting us in all the excitement of your new life, and that those awful Frenchmen have not spoiled you! If you ever grow to like France better than your own noble country I shall find it hard to forgive you.

"Affectionately your sister,

"JANE."

What wedding? Whose wedding? Not her own, surely? No, the thing was impossible. Grip's letter was very long, and contained, among other news, that of his advancement to the direction of the mill at what seemed to him a princely salary. There would be money enough in the family henceforth, thank heaven! and his first

thought was for his younger brother. Had Tom all he needed, and to spare? If not, Grip's well-filled purse—the family purse—stood open, and he must draw from it as freely as though it were his own. With tears in his eyes Tom hurried through this to the passage in the letter to which Jane's line referred :

“And now for something that will take your breath away. The impossible has happened, and Jane is engaged to our old friend and enemy, Mr. Larkin. The blast of the last trumpet could not have startled me more than did her calm announcement of this convulsion of nature. All my ideas are turned topsy-turvy, and I look for the millennium next week. They are to be married very soon, though the date is not yet fixed. Meanwhile their ecstasy is pathetic. The parlor has been given up to the courting, and they are together there at this moment, reading Euripides. Why are you not at home to laugh at them with me? Write immediately, to tell me what you think of this and everything you can about yourself. How are the Lises, and where are they?

“Your affectionate brother,

“G. S.”

This, then, was the happiness which Jane had the assurance to call unexpected. She little knew that she wrote thus to one who, two years before, had been a chance witness of her adventure at the

Hermitage. The task Mr. Larkin had set himself then seemed hopeless ; but he had accomplished it, and they were reading Euripides ! What might not Love do after this ? Hal had already taken a flying leap over the hurdle, following hard and fast upon the heels of his former schoolmaster. Who next ? The thought of the Hermitage, together with one clause of Grip's letter, suggested that question and its answer. Certain suspicions, long latent in Tom's mind, were now suddenly aroused again. On that remarkable morning Grip and Hannah Lisle had also wandered off together into the Hermitage. They had been strangely silent there, and one of them, at least, had grown visibly embarrassed afterward at a chance allusion to the scene of their walk. Why ? Had Grip, too, lost his head, to be rebuffed, as Mr. Larkin was ? Something of this sort might well have happened, for that his brother had always admired Miss Lisle, Tom could not help believing. And here now was a fresh inquiry for her flung in at the end of his letter with a carelessness framed to deceive, but not deceptive in the least. That meant nothing at all, or it meant much—the latter probably. And if so, Tom was not at all sure that he liked to think about it. In fact, the more he thought the more distressing the thought became. It seemed to him as if the easy path he had been following of late along the outer rim of the world had begun to double and twist into painful complications. The way in had developed itself simply and

naturally enough, but the way out was difficult to see.

The last letter was from one whom Tom, even in his thoughts, had much neglected.

“My dear Tom,” it began, “although I think you have owed me a letter this ever so long, I remember that you must have many correspondents and but little time to give them. So I bear no malice and do not stand upon ceremony, but hope you are still glad to hear what goes on in this corner of the world, which is no longer the quiet corner it used to be. Our dear old garden is hemmed in by high brick walls, and we shall soon be driven out of it. I fear you will have to ask the way to your own door when you come back, for everything is changing—everything, except ourselves. We lead the same placid life, in which our chief excitements are to hear of a letter from Somebody in foreign parts, and to get a hurried, unsatisfactory visit from Sidney (or Pug, as you call him), who rushes in upon us by the last train, and rushes away again by the first. He is in his second year of the medical school, you know, and does extremely well, they say; so there will really be another Doctor Stanhope, of which I am very glad. He is as fond of harrowing adventures as ever, and makes our blood run cold with tales of his hospital experiences—when he can get us to listen to him. Do you remember how he would be wounded in your play in spite of all you could say

or do? The other day I found your sword in the Black Hole, where I secreted myself at rehearsal. What a very disagreeable child I was!

"I have made a new friend, a most surprising one—Mr. Hazeltine. We walk together sometimes, and you are the bond between us, I think, for he always speaks of 'your career,' as he calls it, and seems very fond of you. And yesterday Mr. Buck stopped me in the street to ask if I had heard from Paris. I hadn't, but I told him what I knew, which was all favorable. You see we don't forget you, and can't let you forget us——"

"Has monsieur any orders for the Bourse?" inquired the old clerk, Giraud, breaking in upon Tom's reading.

"Poor Clover!" he muttered, dismissing these uncommercial thoughts, as he pushed away the letters. "Such a pity she's so plain!—Take ten on London, Giraud—at best."

CHAPTER IV.

CAMARADERIE

THE Honorable Lawrence Vandermere, if not thoroughly ashamed of the small attack of nerves (as *Mademoiselle de Champfleury* called it) into which he had been led at the carnival ball, was at least desirous that it should be thoroughly forgotten. For, happening to pass Tom in the street, the very next morning, he stopped his carriage and even descended from it for a cordial word with his young compatriot, who wisely met him half-way in this advance. Mr. Vandermere had been hasty and unreasonable, but this was his method of saying so. Tom, understanding that, forgave him on the spot; and from that hour they were better friends.

One afternoon of the following week Tom drove through the lamplight to the Avenue Marigny. It was a reception-day; but, arriving late, he found that the world had come and gone. Only one old diplomat still lingered to chat with Miss Vandermere; while *Mademoiselle de Champfleury* exchanged notes with an acquaintance of her own sex, who greeted the American cordially. She was a middle-aged woman, looking much younger than

her years, wearing her burden of responsibilities as lightly as a school-girl—yet the mother of four children, and Norman Mallow's wife: two facts which Tom never ceased to find extraordinary. But, by one of those mysterious attractions in which Love revels, the sombre, practical man of affairs and the featherbrained girl had come together early in life. Norman's interests contracted every day; so far as the world went, he was "rusting out," as his brother had declared. Yet he still adored his wife, and it was a mistake on Gresham's part to suppose that he was distressed by her wider range of sympathies. He approved whatever gave her pleasure, and she was easily pleased. The daughter of an English officer, she had been born and brought up in India, never quite outgrowing a childishness truly Oriental. Her life was made up of small frivolities, innocent enough, but light as air. Like a bird of paradise, she was always on the wing, and her high spirits and pleasant freedom from conventionality gave her an unfailing charm, which even Gresham, her severest critic, could not always resist. Tom, who was often a useful ally in her time-killing pursuits, had fallen a victim to the spell, and thought her delightful. After a word with Miss Vandermere—who was in what he called her diplomatic vein, which had a tinge of affectation that he did not fancy—he turned accordingly to the other group, where the two older women at once made room for him.

Mrs. Mallow, hailing him by his Christian name—"for he's one of us, you know," she explained to Mademoiselle de Champfleury—went on to say that she had heard of him at the ball, and thought it very hard that he had not asked her to go.

"I ask nothing better," Tom replied. "Will you go to the next one with me?"

"Ah, now it is too late. Another time you would have no such exciting adventures."

"Adventures!" he repeated. "You are strangely misinformed. I had none."

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Mallow, yielding instantly to a mischievous desire to torment him. "And pray what became of the ring? Never attempt to deceive me," she added, with her sweetest smile at his blank look. "You see I am well informed."

Tom felt sure that Miss Vandermere must have heard the speech, though she did not move a muscle. Mam'zelle, on the contrary, gave signs of restless curiosity.

"What is this?" she asked. "What has happened? If there is a story, let us hear it."

"By all means," said Tom, turning upon Mrs. Mallow with the utmost calmness. "Pray tell us what the story is." He was convinced that his friend would spare him if left to herself, and she prudently did so. A confused account of the scene in the corridor had reached her ears by chance. She wished to know more, and, if possible, to identify Tom's veiled companion. The way to do

that was to catch him off his guard at a more favorable moment. Declaring, therefore, that the story was too slight to be told, she adroitly drew Mam'zelle's attention to something else. The danger passed, and Tom, for Miss Vandermere's sake, was much relieved. Whether Mam'zelle knew of it or not, general conversation upon the subject would be undesirable. In a few moments both visitors took leave; then Tom, preparing to follow them, drew out the glove Miss Vandermere had dropped at the ball, and returned it to her. This led to a revival of Mam'zelle's inquisitiveness.

"What did the woman mean?" she asked.

"Surely, we were not recognized?"

"No," said Tom; "that is impossible."

"And so you went back to adventures of which, it appears, we are to be kept in ignorance."

"She said that," he replied, laughing. "I say nothing."

"Méchant!" retorted Mademoiselle de Champfleury. "Oh, these men! How shall we bear this, Una? Not even our Saint Thomas is to be trusted."

"I am not so sure of that," said Miss Vandermere. "Why did you come so late, Mr. Sylvester? I have hardly had a word with you."

"Of what use to come earlier, with the whole diplomatic corps at your feet?"

"Faint heart!" she answered, smiling. "You are no true American. If you were, you would

find yourself on Sunday at the Luxembourg gallery. We are going there, after breakfast, to see the pictures."

"And we shall be alone in the crowd," added Mam'zelle; "without even so much as a Secretary of Legation. Now, if you were only one to trust——"

"But as I'm not," continued he, "who will venture to tell me I shall not be there?" And in this negative manner the appointment was confirmed.

At that time the State gallery of modern art still occupied a wing of the old Palais du Sénat in the Rue de Vaugirard. The allotted space was cramped and by no means well lighted; but the rambling rooms and corridors with deeply recessed windows overlooking the beautiful Luxembourg garden had a suggestion of the past in them, favorable, upon the whole, to enjoyment of the collection, which was not large enough to bring on the peculiar form of fatigue known as the *maladie des galeries*. The palace-garden lies in the heart of an interesting quarter, where every turn reveals some splendid monument or awakens some historic association, and Tom had passed many a leisure hour there. As for the pictures, though he knew them all by heart, he felt that they could not be seen too often. The prospect of an hour's discussion of his favorite masters with an agreeable companion delighted him therefore. When the Sunday came, he took his noon meal at a cheerful café in the Latin Quarter, afterward strolling leisurely through

the garden to the gray palace-walls that fairly glistened in the winter sunshine. He found the light withig exceptionally good ; but for the moment he let the pictures go, and, seating himself in a corner of the principal room, watched the doors swing open to the increasing throng, which had all its usual diversity of age, dress, and rank. Close by, two workmen in blouses warmed themselves at a furnace-grate, while Tom reflected that, according to the well-known custom of their class, they had probably come there solely for that purpose. An attendant passed—the typical *gardien* in dark-blue uniform and cocked hat, with grizzled, cropped hair and formidable black mustache. This official, recognizing Tom, bade him a pleasant good-day ; whereupon Tom, over whom the loneliness of crowds was already stealing, felt moved by a gratitude out of all proportion to the trifling act of civility. “ It is a great people,” he murmured, his mind travelling three thousand miles in an instant to compare this country’s manners with those of his own. One of his boyish melancholy fits settled down upon him, and he was only aroused from it by the voice of Miss Vandermere, who with her companion stood close at his side before he discovered their presence. At her mocking salutation his face brightened, and in the light talk that followed as they went about among the pictures he held his own very well. In one of the smaller rooms Mademoiselle de Champfleury came upon an intimate friend, and the two sat down together at

a sunny window, while Tom and Miss Vandermere went on into the long gallery where the more important work was shown. Everything here invited careful study, which Una, growing graver, seemed now disposed to give. They moved forward slowly, with a whispered word or two, and stopped at last in silence before Couture's "*Décadence*," which filled the central space of one wall from floor to ceiling. The great canvas, since transferred to the Louvre, is unquestionably the painter's masterpiece: it represents the last wild hour of a Roman banquet, upon which two philosophers look down sadly and scornfully. The suggestion of allegory, so characteristic of this master, and often too definite, here keeps its proper place and remains an under-current only. The application of the fable is there, but one must deduce that for himself. It is a composition superb in the drawing, wonderful alike in its variety and its restraint: effective not only as a whole, but also in the attitude and expression of individual figures—in short, a work of genius, answering every demand upon it, with some new evidence unobserved before.

"What a glorious thing!" said Tom, after their long pause. "Look at that philosopher. They say Couture waited months for that face, and found it at last in a common workingman."

"Yes," said Una, "it is very strong and very sad. But, to my mind, there is another stronger and sadder still."

"You mean the woman's," replied Tom, turning

toward the central figure upon which Miss Vandermere's eyes were fixed. "She is like a heroine of tragedy; Rachel might have posed for her."

The girl, wearing the white garment of the feast, occupies the place of honor, full in the foreground. She reclines in the host's arms; but her eyes, and plainly her thoughts too, have wandered from him: her listless, unconscious grace is a triumph of skill, expressing, as it does, complete indifference to the bacchanalian revel by which she is surrounded. For the moment the man who offers the wine-cup is no more to her than are the two philosophers. Her features are regular and fine, but all their light has gone out, leaving in them a kind of sunless beauty, impressive yet profoundly mournful.

"She is in it, but not of it," Una continued; "she has learned the wretchedness of life, and despises the whole thing—herself, most of all."

"Fortunately, life is not all like that," said Tom, with a smile.

"Why not? Greek, Roman, Parisian—yes, or American—men are much the same."

"How bitterly you speak! like a German pessimist—or, to come a little nearer home, like *Mademoiselle de Champfleury*."

"I speak from experience," said Una, seating herself upon a bench that stood just behind them.

"And experience," returned Tom, taking the seat at her side—"experience teaches you, then, to distrust all mankind?"

"Precisely."

"Ah, but you have no right to say that," Tom asserted in a triumphant tone. "You forget that you found me one to be trusted, and that when Mam'zelle doubted it, you yourself defended me."

"That is true," Una admitted, with heightened color. "I beg your pardon for neglecting to make the exception that proves the rule. I know you would help me if you could. Why is it that I always make a mentor of you? I speak to you as I can speak to no one else, and find a sort of comfort in it. Yet you are younger than I am, and have suffered very little, I am sure, at the hands of the world."

Tom sighed. "You take a great deal for granted," said he. "I am convinced that we all get our full share of trouble, sooner or later; and there is trouble ahead for me—not far off either."

"What is the trouble? Tell me: it may be that I can help you."

"No," said Tom; "it would do no good to tell you."

"Don't be too sure of that. It certainly would do no harm. And I have a certain claim upon you, as you must acknowledge. You know my secret, or at least a part of it. I think I have the right to know at least a part of yours."

"Well, then: I have been ass enough to fall in love. That's all."

"You do not pay the fortunate girl a compliment."

"Don't misunderstand: there is a complication which perplexes me in more ways than one."

"Is she an American?"

"Yes—one whom you know, and like."

"Go on," said Una, now deeply interested.

"If I know her, I must know who she is."

"You will not tell her?"

"Of course not."

"It is Miss Lisle."

"Hannah Lisle! To be sure: I might have guessed it. You think she does not know?"

"She cannot dream of what I have but just found out myself."

"I see," said Miss Vandermere, thoughtfully; "that is to say, I do not see. What is to prevent your taking the next step? Wherein lies the complication?"

"In the first place," replied Tom, "there is no proof that she cares a button for me. Then, too, I have reason to think that some one for whom I care immensely has been dead in love with her for years."

"Does she know of that?" asked Una, after a moment's thought.

"Yes; if I am right, she does know, undoubtedly."

"Then she has refused him. Why should you hesitate a moment longer? Why sacrifice yourself for a rival who is already out of the way? Who is this paragon whose happiness you set above your own?"

"He is my brother," said Tom. And with a few words he described Grip to her in glowing terms. He spoke of the affection between the brothers and of the incidents which had occurred to strengthen it; of the swimming adventure and the rescue; of the various grounds upon which his suspicion was based; and he ended by declaring that he could neither enter into competition with his elder brother nor ever permit him to know of their possible rivalry. Were the case reversed he did not need to be told that Grip would hold his tongue.

"And is this what you mean to do?" Una asked.

"Yes."

"On the chance that she may change her mind in case your brother's mind should hold, you will let her go back to America without a word?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Assuming, for argument's sake, that she loves you: three people, then, are to be made unhappy instead of one."

Tom shrugged his shoulders. "You speak as if we two were the only men in the world. She will not break her heart for either of us."

"You evade the point. I assumed that you were the man."

"Well, she will get over it."

"And the men? Will they get over it?" inquired Una, mischievously. Then, as he made no answer, she continued: "Less easily, of course. We are inferior creatures; our feelings are of the

slightest, when we have them at all. That is what you men think of us. You forget that in the carnival we must all go masked. So long as the mask pleases you, we are honored by your admiration ; when it becomes worn and faded, we are laughed at. You find something ludicrous in a single woman the moment she grows old. Yet in most cases she does not remain single from choice, and her story would touch you, perhaps, if it could be known. But a girl is hampered by conventionalities, to be broken only at the risk of shocking you. You demand that she shall smile impassively, even while she is tortured. The smallest attempt to win you may destroy her, and you reproach her with indifference. Can't you see that if you won't assert yourself she is condemned to silence all her days ? ”

“ You advise me to speak, then ? ”

“ Yes ; in justice to her, if she loves you.”

“ Who can tell that ? ”

“ There is no hurry. Wait until she comes back. It may be that I can help you. Oh, don't be afraid that I shall betray your confidence. I will keep it as scrupulously as I know you will keep mine. And I thank you for giving me this proof of your good opinion. Whatever happens, I have one honest friend.”

“ Yes,” he agreed ; “ and, returning the compliment, I can say the same.”

“ Good ! It is a bargain, then : we will do all we can to help each other ; we will bind ourselves

to good fellowship—to what these people call a ‘camaraderie’”!

“An alliance for mutual protection,” said Tom. “Although I can’t see how I am to do my share.”

“No matter; it is enough that you are willing. Hush! Here comes Mam’zelle.”

“What is it you discuss so earnestly, my children?” asked their companion, as she joined them.

“La belle dame sans merci in the picture there,” said Una, rising. “Monsieur thinks he has fallen in love with her.”

Mademoiselle de Champfleury put up her glass to eye critically what she had already seen a hundred times.

“Too much sentiment,” she said, turning away contemptuously. “What would the girl have? Since she sits at the feast, she should be laughing.”

“And yet,” whispered Una, as they went on with the crowd, “even Mademoiselle has her story too.”

CHAPTER V.

THE BREAKER OF HEARTS

"**B**ON JOUR, chef! What distresses you?" asked Gresham Mallow, cheerily, as he came in somewhat earlier than usual one fine morning. "You look as if the weight of the world were on your shoulders."

"Norman's not here, for one thing," said Tom, throwing down his pen with a sigh.

"No, and he won't be. The gout has clawed him in its clutch once more, and to-day we must fight without him. What else?"

"I have had words with Leroux, and he has taken himself off."

"So much the better. I always thought that fellow too high and mighty for a corresponding clerk. You discharged him, eh?"

"Not a bit of it," replied Tom, laughing in secret relief at this light treatment of the matter. "He discharged me; that is to say, he objected to my criticism, and resigned his place in a huff upon the instant. It's very annoying, but——"

"Annoying? Nonsense! He's a conceited ass; we can get a better man for half the money. What! Ten o'clock already? I'm off to keep an appoint-

ment. Don't expect me back for two hours at least."

"But that Bordeaux matter : I wish you would look into it before you go ; here are the documents," urged Tom, producing a file of papers.

"Can't stop, my boy. Do the best you can without me." So, evading further protest, Gresham closed the outer door upon all these perplexities at once, and was gone.

Of course, his was the mighty engine of thought to be always forging ahead, while his corps of plodders stayed behind to repair the rails ; and Tom, brought up in this faith—indeed knowing no other—could but wish the "brain-power" success in the new enterprise, whatever it might be, dropping back himself to a task that grew more and more complicated as the time wore on. Through it all, however, there ran a sustaining thought which from one bad quarter of an hour to another revived his spirits like a draught of wine. That busy day, so trying in its dreariness of detail, had been appointed by Miss Lisle for her return to Paris. Only those who have lived long among strangers know this peculiar glow of pleasure at the approaching arrival of a friend. Even the prospect of renewing an indifferent acquaintance that dates from former days becomes a joyful event under such circumstances ; and when the friendly face is young and of the opposite sex, joy deepens in its due proportion. The oft-repeated reflection had almost convinced Tom that he had every reason

to be light-hearted, when the door opened, and Strong, the cashier, came in.

"What am I to do, Mr. Sylvester?" he asked.
"Giraud declines to go to the Bourse."

"Why?"

"Ugliness, that's all. He was quarrelling with one of the boys, and I told him to be quiet. He took offence, and now refuses to obey my orders."

"Send him to me," said Tom, outwardly calm enough, but inwardly dismayed. For Giraud was a valuable servant, having the house affairs at his finger-tips. To part with him abruptly, as he had parted with Leroux, would be a serious thing: it was not to be thought of; and yet to countenance the man's insubordination was, of course, impossible.

"How shall I get out of it?" thought the careworn chief in the brief interval before the rebellious soldier, more than twice his own age, stood before him, rigid, with pursed-up lips and a look of dogged resistance. But he was really a good, faithful soul, devoted to the Mallows, and very fond of Tom, who, remembering this, resolved to undermine force with gentleness.

"Giraud, what does this mean?" he asked, quietly.

"Monsieur Strong"—began the other in an angry tone.

"One moment, please"—said Tom, speaking still more softly. "If you have complaints, you may bring them later to Mr. Mallow. You have dis-

obeyed orders. You must see yourself that this is wrong." Then, as Giraud made no reply, he continued: "We must work together, and help each other: we are all servants, not masters. Had I spoken to my superior as you spoke to yours, I should expect to be discharged on the spot."

There was still no answer; but, to Tom's great surprise, old Giraud's lip quivered, and his eyes filled with tears.

"I am very sorry, monsieur," stammered he. "Monsieur need say no more: I will go to the Bourse."

"À la bonne heure!" said Tom, with difficulty concealing his delight at the unexpected victory. "There — there! Do not distress yourself, mon ami! let this be forgotten."

"Monsieur is always good," murmured the refractory subject, whom one kind word had conquered, drying his eyes, and shuffling off in such agitation that he left the door half open. Looking out, Tom saw him stop to whisper in Strong's ear. The cashier turned abruptly, and the two shook hands. Clearly, peace had been restored between them.

When the lull of the breakfast-hour came, Tom thrust into his pocket three or four private letters which he had found no time to read, and hurried out to a small café in one of the cross streets near by. Besides the ever-pressing claims of business, he had additional cause for haste in the probability that the Lisles would call upon him—for

money, if not for their mail, which had been awaiting them a week. He began upon his own now, between the courses. A letter from his brother, evidently a long one, he left for the last ; and the minutes flew so fast that he was on the point of carrying it back with him unopened. "No," he decided ; "something of importance may have happened. I will give it one look at least."

He blessed his lucky stars that led him to this change of mind when he tore the letter open ; for it began, "Dear Hannah," and the few words which he could not help reading were, to say the least, very friendly. He saw that Grip's thoughts must have been busy with two correspondents at the same moment, and that his own enclosure would probably be found addressed to Miss Lisle. This awkward little blunder might embarrass her, if she discovered it ; but perhaps that could be prevented. Returning post-haste to his desk, he called for the Lisle letters, fortunately still unclaimed. Yes, here was Grip's familiar handwriting on the familiar envelope, which Tom now cautiously opened, finding his letter, substituting hers, and resealing it. This had hardly been accomplished when the door fell back just far enough to give him a glimpse of the prettiest face he knew. Then it was softly closed, and the visitor announced herself by a timid rap, which he cut short by flinging the door wide open and welcoming her warmly.

"Why did you hesitate to come in ?" he went

on: "you, of all people, who bring the air of home with you!"

"Is that a compliment?" Miss Lisle asked. "The home wind is the east wind, remember; and it seems to blow to-day through every street in Paris. I hesitated because you looked so busy. I'm not alone: mamma is buying things—*chiffons* you say, don't you? and papa is drawing money in the outer office. I couldn't wait for him on the door-step. Thank you," she added, as Tom moved a chair toward the fire; "this is ideal. Now, if I interrupt you——"

"I have nothing in the world to do," protested Tom, with a perfectly straight face. "But I will pretend to be desperately busy until you have read your letters. See, here they are, waiting for you." And he handed them to her, dexterously slipping Grip's below the others.

"Three for mamma and seven for me—delightful!" she cried, throwing down her muff, and breaking the first seal with a merry laugh. "I can't think why people write to me: I am such a wretched correspondent."

Tom thought he could tell why, as he sat down at his desk to watch the pretty, mobile face unconsciously change its expression with each new phrase of the correspondence in which she was absorbed. He had never seen her looking better. The bright, breezy day lent additional freshness to her rosy cheeks. How fine and soft her hair was; he had never noticed that her lashes were so

long. She leaned back in the leather arm-chair, and crossed her feet on the fender-rail: uncomfortably small they seemed to him; but then her hands were very small too. The bunch of violets she wore already filled the room with its sweet perfume. It was impossible to work under these distracting influences. Tom did not even take up his pen, but only drummed upon the disordered desk restlessly.

A boy came in to say that Mr. Lisle desired to speak with him upon money matters in the other room. Hannah did not even look up at the interruption, and Tom withdrew quietly without disturbing her. The father was still a jovial, sympathetic soul, remarkably young for his years; but he had begun to show the nervousness over trifles that age often brings. They were about to take an apartment on the Champs Élysées, he explained, for a month or two; but the terms puzzled him: what did this, that, and the other mean? and who should make the repairs—he or the owner? So he went on for half an hour, bringing up one point after another, and then suddenly exclaiming: “Good heavens! I forgot all about Hannah. Where is she?” Tom very gladly relieved Mr. Lisle’s mind of this anxiety, and led the way to the private office.

Hannah had exhausted the news from home, and as they came forward she tossed some unimportant part of it into the fire, talking all the while to a companion, seated, with his back toward them,

deep in the other arm-chair. It was only Gresham Mallow, who had returned opportunely just as she began to wonder why they left her so long alone, and who rose at once to greet Mr. Lisle with cordial deference, while Tom turned the other way.

"So you are to become Parisians," said he. "I congratulate you."

"Yes," she answered. "You must come to see us the moment our house is in order."

As Tom thanked her, he could not help thinking that she might have desired to see him again before this uncertain date. Evidently the omission did not occur to her, and she continued :

"Our apartment is an *entresol*, and will be charming, I think. We met Mr. Mallow, and he helped us to decide upon it. I don't know what we should have done without him. Yes, papa, I am coming."

It was Gresham who went out with them to their carriage, Tom remaining behind in a state of irritation. The air was still heavy with the odor of her flowers, and he expressed his feelings by flinging open the window to destroy even this agreeable trace of her.

"So that detained him!" he muttered. "Of course! Business may take care of itself, and I am not to be considered."

Gresham reappeared in a moment with a smiling face. "There's a little beauty for you!" he said. "A heart-breaker, isn't she? By the way, she

wants you to call as soon as possible : Hôtel du Rhin. She forgot to mention it."

"Thanks," returned Tom, dryly ; then fumbling among his papers : "And about Bordeaux?" said he.

Later in the day—very late indeed, when the others were all gone—Tom went up to the hearth to stir the fire. There lay some scraps of paper just as they had fluttered down from Miss Lisle's hand. He recognized Grip's envelope in brushing it toward the coals. There was no especial significance in that, but the stir he made among the ashes suddenly revealed a page of the letter itself, half burned and blackened. It kindled at a flash, to fly up the chimney—an ashy web into which sparks were woven ; and in his mood of the moment Tom found this revelation full of meaning.

"She would not keep it half an hour," he said, angrily. "I suppose all hearts are alike to those who have none."

His speech was bitter as a rejected lover's, and even more unreasonable than such speech is apt to be ; for his grounds of accusation were but signs, still unproved. But a failure to appreciate his brother's noble qualities seemed in Tom's admiring eyes a graver fault than any wrong done to himself. And yet, a moment afterward, so weak is human nature, that Tom, with all his displeasure at this discovery, could not help finding an unexpected gleam of hope in it.

CHAPTER VI.

FOREBODINGS

I N the narrow field of Tom's heart joy and pain kept up a constant struggle, and were about equally matched during the few weeks that followed. If there was uncommon pleasure in the opportunity of seeing his old friend familiarly day by day, there was also a kind of torture in it; and even the pleasure when most keenly felt did not quite fulfil its anticipation. The *entresol* of the Champs Élysées proved hardly less of an open house than if it had been a section of the great avenue itself through which all the world drives. He was rarely able to find Miss Lisle without a circle of admirers around her, and no peculiar consideration ever singled him out from the crowd. In the former visit, when the Lisles were still strangers to Paris, he had been their chief friend and counsellor, consulted in everything. Now all was changed: both Hannah and her mother had grown Parisian, cosmopolitan to a distressing degree; titles and decorations jostled each other in the little *antichambre*. He was a clerk in a banking-house, least of their guests in rank, in fortune and in name.

He assured himself that all this was natural and proper; nay, more, he went so far as to assert that his own undue sensitiveness had detected a fancied difference where none existed. On his side there had been a change, which he was willing to admit—which, indeed, he had already admitted to his sympathetic friend, Miss Vandermere, on that Sunday in the Luxembourg. If his sentimental interest in Hannah Lisle had slowly developed into the absorbing passion of his life, as he firmly believed, the subject of it could hardly be blamed for not divining each stage of the development at a glance, and her attitude toward him, while still remaining one of warm friendship, must inevitably seem cold. How was she to know he loved her? And even if she suspected that interesting fact, would not the reserve, in which young women are trained so carefully, force her to mount guard over the suspicion, to avoid betraying it by the smallest sign?

No, this reasoning, specious as it was, Tom did not find conclusive. Hannah Lisle had known him long, he argued; she had eyes, and must see that there was at least no falling-off in his friendly devotion. Yet she received him now with indifference, possibly no more than the accidental result of these new circumstances, chilling him at times, nevertheless, as though it were deliberately planned. There had sprung up between them a growth of small conventionalities that became more and more obstructive daily. The personal

note was almost always wanting in their talk. If she still cared for the things which concerned him nearly, she found no time to tell him so.

One brilliant afternoon of early spring Tom shut up his desk somewhat earlier than usual, and strolled out toward the Boulevard with no plan more definite than that of spending an hour in the sunshine. But, as he passed the Madeleine, he observed that the flower-market, held in the square two days of every week, was then going on. He crossed the pavement and went down the double line of temporary wooden booths, glowing with Nature's colors skilfully combined for purposes of traffic. Tom's hand involuntarily went into his pocket, and, as he stopped before a stall filled with violets, the pretty country-girl in charge assured him of their freshness. He remembered that Hannah preferred violets to other flowers, and that she often wore them, then bought a handful, and turning from the crowd took the Rue Boissy d'Anglas leading straight to the Champs Élysées. It was almost a week since he had seen any of the Lisle family. Why not call, he thought, and insure his welcome by the very simple means at hand?

The narrow street that makes a sort of compromise between old and new Paris, displaying characteristics of both, came to an end in the great, open pleasure-ground which Tom could never quite dissociate from the mournful impression of his first night in a foreign land. He

smiled now at the recollection. How often since then he had stopped to admire the splashing fountains, the graceful dome of the Invalides, the twin spires of Sainte Clotilde rising airily in the hazy light! To-day, as he sighed to think, it required a positive effort to notice them at all; they had grown as commonplace as anything in the High Street of Worthingham. In this train of thought, with senses temporarily acute, he walked on, noting afresh peculiarities that had lost their strangeness: the jointed pipes of the street-sprinklers, on little wheels, drawn about like toys; the seller of liquorice-water, with the tall can at his back, his clinking pewter cups, his harsh cries; the queer merry-go-rounds; the open-air stages of the *cafés-chantants* among the trees; the *bonnes*, with their starched white caps and parti-colored streamers; the whole scene had an unusual quality for him on this fine afternoon, and he felt glad to be a part of it. Even the smallest unit in this splendid city was a citizen of the world.

So he came to the lesser fountains of the Rond Point, and waited between them for his opportunity to pass through the lines of carriages crossing here in all directions. Then, just as he congratulated himself upon reaching the opposite curb safely, he caught sight of Miss Lisle, seated in an open victoria, alone. She went by without seeing him, while he followed her with his eyes, in the hope that she would alight at her own doorway, which was not far off. In fact, she did so a mo-

ment later, dismissing the carriage and hurrying in before Tom had time to join her. Thus assured by the best of evidence that she would be at home, he turned into the arched court, and, without questioning the concierge, went directly up the short staircase to ring at the *entresol* door.

There was such stillness upon the landing that he could hear the steps of the servant, suddenly checked by a voice he knew to be Miss Lisle's. After a short pause the steps came on to the door, which was opened by a maid who did not often perform that service. She gave a doubtful look in answer to Tom's inquiry.

"Pardon! Monsieur's name is——"

"Sylvester."

"Monsieur will pardon; I should have known. I regret that mademoiselle has not yet come in."

"But——" said Tom, unable to repress this single word of surprise.

"She is out, monsieur," returned the maid, calmly extending her tray for Tom's card, which he deposited there in silence.

As he turned away, his face flushed with indignation, excessive perhaps, yet not wholly unreasonable. Miss Lisle expected somebody—some man, on whose account she had denied herself to others. She could not have known, to be sure, that she was thus excluding her old friend; but she knew it now, and she did not call him back. The concierge's daughter smiled upon him from the window of her *loge*, and in return for this at-

tention received his bunch of violets ; they were in his way now, he was only too glad to get rid of them. The bright prospect before him was all suddenly clouded, and, before he knew it, he found himself back again at the Rond Point.

A hand touched his shoulder. He turned, and saw Mr. Vandermere, with a handsome young Frenchman, who was at once presented to him as the Vicomte de Marsan.

"What good luck to come upon you!" went on the minister. "De Marsan has been asking me about American securities. I have told him in a general way that he can hardly do better with his money. You are just the man for details."

They drew aside from the crowd to talk of the matter briefly. De Marsan, who spoke English uncommonly well for one of his nation, put several leading questions, which Tom was able to answer satisfactorily. Then the Frenchman lifted his hat with a pleasant smile, and went his way, promising to call upon Tom at the Rue Tronchet within a very few days.

"That's a good fellow," said Mr. Vandermere, following the trim figure with his eyes. "If all Frenchmen were like him, the future of France would be less uncertain than it is."

"A monarchist, of course," said Tom.

"Yes, but not a bigoted one ; although I fear he has more faith in our republic than in his own. Traditions hamper him, no doubt ; but one cannot help respecting his opinion. He has a keen, in-

telligent mind, fresh as his own woods and fields in Southwestern France ; he is Parisian for only a few weeks of the year. There is no decadence about him."

The minister was on his way home, and Tom turned with him up the broad, vacant sidewalk of the Avenue Marigny. They went on slowly, Mr. Vandermere warming with his theme and enlarging upon it ; the monologue was scarcely interrupted by an occasional word of assent from Tom, whose look meanwhile strayed away in advance as far as the minister's door, from which a tall man suddenly appeared, coming toward them. As he drew nearer, Tom, somewhat to his surprise, remembered the face as one called to his notice in a startling manner on the night of the carnival ball. It was the Baron de Rozières. Tom's companion, absorbed in the hopes of France, remained unaware of his approach, until the baron, close upon them, bowed formally with great deference. Mr. Vandermere coldly returned his salutation, and when the Frenchman was out of hearing said, in a significant tone :

"Do you know that man ?"

"Only by sight," said Tom, with an indifference he was far from feeling. "De Rozières is his name, I believe."

"Yes. That's a fellow of another stamp. I heartily wish I knew as little of him as you do. I have forbidden Una to receive him ; I will not have him in my house."

"Why?" asked Tom, silently grateful that Mr. Vandermere, in spite of his avowed knowledge, was not omniscient.

"Because I believe him to be the worst type of Empire-Parisian—corrupt to the core; the devil, clothed with all Iago's outward honesty, that's the mischief of it. For he is infernally good-looking and plausible too; he seems to have a kind of fascination for some people. Remember what I tell you, and look out for him. *Cave canem: he bites.*"

Tom's laugh covered a new anxiety which had increased within him at every word just spoken.

"Thank you," he said, simply. "But monsieur le baron and I are not very likely to be thrown together."

"So much the better," Mr. Vandermere decided, as they stopped before his door. "Won't you come in? If Una is at home she will be glad to see you."

Had the invitation been given a few moments earlier, Tom would surely have declined it; he had not felt in the mood for seeing people. Now he followed his host, impelled by a painful curiosity which he tried to argue away.

"It can't be," he thought. "What proof have I that she was at home to him?"

Miss Vandermere stood alone, with her back toward them, in one of the drawing-room windows. As she turned at the sound of their steps, Tom fancied that she looked unusually pale.

"*Una mia !*" said her father, playfully : " here comes a visitor without the formalities. You are not 'out,' I hope."

"Not to Mr. Sylvester," she answered, with a smiling face, into which the color slowly returned. Her negative implied a positive that brought to Tom's mind unexpected relief. His half-formed fear, before it had taken shape, was suddenly dispelled.

"Well, comrade?" said Una, when they were seated, and her father had left them. She sat near a small table on which some fresh roses slowly unfolded themselves in the warmth of the room. Pulling the vase toward her, as she spoke, she now began to rearrange these flowers, merely from that nervous desire to employ the hands which women sometimes feel.

"Well?" repeated Tom, mechanically, staring at the fire.

Una looked at him closely before speaking again.

"What is it?" she asked. "Something has gone wrong."

"Nothing," he protested ; "nothing at all."

"Have you seen Miss Lisle to-day, by any chance?"

"No. We have not met for a week—greatly to her disappointment, no doubt. Why did you ask?"

"Because, as your good comrade, I feel that I should warn you not to expect too much of Han-

nah Lisle. I have reason to think—no matter what I think; don't ask me, for it may be absurd. Wait a while and see."

"Thank you," said Tom, feebly. "I see that you have been speaking to her of me."

"No, I have said nothing. I have observed—listened, too, a little, when I was forced to listen; and my conclusion is——"

"Do not tell me," urged Tom, hastily. "I prefer to wait, as you advise."

"Yes, it is best to wait, I think, and let our camaraderie go on."

"Thank you," said Tom. Then, with a feverish determination to change the subject at all hazards, he added: "But it is no camaraderie at all."

"Why?" she asked, bending low over the flowers.

"Because it is one-sided. You know all; I know nothing."

"Nothing?"

"Nothing that I can understand."

There was a pause. Una lifted up her face, pale once more in the waning light of the afternoon. Her eyes met his without flinching.

"Are not these roses beautiful?" she asked.

"Yes," he said, rising to take leave.

"I did not mean that," she went on, hurriedly. "Don't go yet. Don't misunderstand me. If you only knew——"

"I do know more than you think," said Tom,

reseating himself, half pleased with his own malice in turning the tables thus to her evident confusion. "I know, for instance, what your father thinks of the Baron de Rozières."

"My father! He is bitterly prejudiced. His opinion, once formed, is never shaken. He is a man of iron."

"I see," Tom sighed. "And so he has been here this afternoon?"

"What do you mean? Who has been here?"

"Monsieur le Baron de Rozières."

"No, that is a mistake," she answered, slowly and painfully, as if it were an effort to tell this simple truth. "I have not seen him."

"So much the better; though perhaps I have no right to say that. But I want to help you, and——"

"You cannot help me," she continued, in the same labored tone. "If you were a woman I might tell you. I have no friends among the women; they are all acquaintances. No, I cannot tell you—now, at least; another time I may."

"As you think best," said Tom, again rising to go. "But you must remember the bargain, and that when the time comes I will help you."

She rose too and gave him her hand.

"I know you will, Tom," she said, calling him so for the first time. "I believe you are the one human being I can trust."

"Thank you," he returned; then hesitated for

an instant with her hand in his, and finding no more to say, went out in silent wonder.

He had no sooner gone than Una crossed the room, as if to call him back ; but she heard the door close heavily and knew that he was out of reach. Then, opening her clenched hand she flung into the fire a visiting-card, already crushed and broken—the card of the Baron de Rozières brought in with his flowers—and sinking into a chair, she sobbed bitterly in the dark, alone.

Part IV.

THE HAND OF ROUGH MISCHANCE

CHAPTER I.

A PILGRIM AND A STRANGER

THE Vicomte de Marsan's chance interview with Tom at the street-corner was followed up, according to his promise, by another and a longer one in the office of the Rue Tronchet; the result being that a large sum passed for investment into the hands of "Monsieur Sylvestre," as the Frenchman called him, who thus gained a valuable account for the Mallows and a pleasant acquaintance for himself. The Vicomte liked Tom, and would deal with no one else. But for this liking, as he assured Mr. Vandermere afterward, his money might have been invested otherwise—less securely, he did not doubt. Mr. Vandermere, meeting Norman Mallow, felt it was no more than fair to tell him this; and in consequence, Norman, who was little given to compliment, surprised Tom one morning by expressing strong approval of his fidelity and good judgment. Tom flushed with pleasure, but modestly replied that he had done very little, and that too much praise was dangerous.

"Not a bit of it," Norman retorted, bluntly. "I mean what I say, and it's the truth. There's that

Barclay account too—your affair entirely. He still keeps a good balance with us, doesn't he?"

"Yes," said Tom, not without a certain pride on that score, for Mr. Barclay likewise always preferred to deal with him. "And it will soon be increased, he tells me."

"Exactly; and they write that he has opened an active account with us in London." Then Mr. Mallow called for the balance-sheet, and after examination asserted that it looked in uncommonly good shape, and that things were really very promising, very promising indeed.

If bustle meant prosperity they certainly had their full share of it; the rush of spring travel had fairly begun, and all day long the office swarmed with strangers. Perplexing as Tom's work often was, it never lacked variety, and he bore his load of responsibility more lightly every day; partly, no doubt, because of a marked change for the better in Gresham Mallow, who was, for the time being, constancy itself. The erratic "brain-power," leaving the London house in Marmaduke's hands, had settled down definitely in Paris solely for business reasons, as he took pains to state. He now appeared early upon the busy scene and was among the last to leave it, directing, proposing, disposing and scheming in his most approved manner to the great satisfaction of his subordinates. For he possessed the mysterious and fatal gift of magnetism to a remarkable degree; he had but to talk to persuade the devil himself into virtue, Nor-

man declared. The latter knew that his better-favored twin was too sanguine, and often said so; but quite as often he yielded to Gresham's arguments and was convinced against his will, the fact being that Gresham Mallow was a resolute general, and where he led there could be no other leader, even though the road went straight to Waterloo.

One morning, as Tom had foreseen, Mr. Barclay came to talk over the proposed change in his account. About this man there was an agreeable directness that made even the driest details interesting; he always stated his case clearly and well; if favors were wanted asking for them frankly, with no beating about the bush. It now appeared that he was to receive a large sum of money in English acceptances within a few days; the names were good, the best known, in fact. Could this negotiable paper be discounted in the regular course of business and placed to his credit at once? He might or might not need to use the credit, but he wished to have the power to do so. Though the sum involved was considerable, Tom saw that the security could not be questioned. Inclining to give his assent, he still thought it best to consult Gresham, who was present. The three talked the matter over for some time in a corner of the office, Tom acting as secretary and making pencil memoranda of the names, amounts, terms, etc. This bit of accuracy so pleased Mr. Barclay that he borrowed Tom's pencil to copy these items when the decision was made in his favor.

He then took leave, saying that the acceptances should be handed in as soon as they were received. Tom went to the door with him, but drew back in amazement at hearing beyond it a friendly voice, to which his ears had long been unaccustomed. In another second the speaker confronted them upon the threshold. It was really Mr. Buck, of whose transference to the Eastern Hemisphere Tom had received no word of warning.

"Thomas, my boy, how are you?" cried he.

Tom shook hands heartily with a gasp of delight; and Mr. Barclay, finding himself much in the way, passed on, making the stranger a mute, formal salutation as he went.

"Who's that man?" asked Mr. Buck, sharply. "I've seen him somewhere."

"His name is Barclay."

"Barclay—Barclay? Are you sure?"

"Of course I am. How can you have seen him? He lives in Paris."

"I'll swear I've seen him, and that ain't his name, or mine ain't Jonas Buck. However, it don't matter. Come in, you. Venez, venez, here—inside," and opening the door as he spoke, Mr. Buck introduced a fine specimen of the Parisian *cocher*, plump and ruddy-faced, twirling his glazed hat from hand to hand with an embarrassed smile.

"How much shall I give this cab-driving shark?" continued Tom's old friend, who now produced a palmful of silver. "He wants too

much, I know ; but I can't tell one piece of your confounded money from another." And when the man had been dismissed with the proper fare, his victim gave a deep, expressive sigh.

"Now let me have a good look at you," said he. "How you've grown, Thomas ! and you ain't half so French as I expected." Then at Tom's request he sat down and proceeded, as he said, to tell all about it. He had been in poor health, needed a change of air more than physic, the doctor thought ; so, partly for that, partly to see life, he had decided upon a three months' trip, sudden-like, keeping the fact a secret, as a surprise to Tom. He had come down from Havre the night before, safe and sound in body, but in more or less of a state of mind. He felt like a round peg in a square hole, that was the long and short of the matter. He couldn't understand things ; yet he had studied French hard, with a master, in order to astonish the natives. His new language was all there, but the words wouldn't come ; and the folks he met talked too fast and with too much pronunciation. How he had found his way at all, the Lord only knew.

"But I set out to come, so I've done it. There's a heap of things to see, and I'm a-goin' to see 'em all. Tell me what to tackle first, and I'll get out of your way. No man's nothin' that don't depend on himself, your Uncle Dan'l says."

"What have you seen already ?" asked Tom.

"Nothin' but the best thing here, and that's

you. It's a great comfort to find one man who speaks the Lord's language."

Tom laughingly prepared to jot down on paper a short list of certain monuments that would give Mr. Buck a morning's work—Notre Dame, the Arc de Triomphe, the Louvre. He felt for his pencil, which was not to be found; Mr. Barclay, who had borrowed it, as he remembered, must have carried it off inadvertently.

"What have you lost?" asked Mr. Buck, whose keen eyes still followed every motion of his friend with active interest.

"Nothing," said Tom, anxious to avoid further discussion over Mr. Barclay's name. Then, taking up a pen, he made the list in a moment. The traveller from a modern to an antique land studied it thoughtfully.

"Ain't there a graveyard?" demanded he.

"Oh, yes." And Tom, concealing his amusement at this unexpected cropping-out of the New England austerity, added to his list the cemetery of Père Lachaise.

"Thank you," said Mr. Buck. "Now I'll get a voiture" (he pronounced it "voycher") "and go there first. My wife'll want to hear about it. I don't care for scenery much myself, but she does. She's very fond of cemeteries."

A cab was ordered, and while it drew up Tom introduced his visitor to Gresham, as well as to Norman, who came in at the moment. Mr. Buck then departed in pursuit of pleasure, agreeing to

meet Tom late in the day for dinner and the theatre afterward. The office work went on, and much to Tom's surprise, his first task proved to be the pacification of Norman Mallow, whose old distrust of Mr. Barclay revived in a most unreasonable way upon hearing of the interview that had taken place in his absence.

"Who is John Barclay?" he growled; "who gives him all this money, and why is it given to us?"

Gresham laughed. "He may be a scoundrel, but he deals with the virtuous virtuously. Listen!" and he read aloud the array of strong names the man had left behind him. "Fairly good paper, that. It might be called gilt-edged, as Tom would say."

"Yes," admitted his brother, reluctantly; "fairly good—when you get it. Mark my words: Mr. Barclay, when it comes to the point, will never offer that to you."

"Then we are neither the better for him nor the worse," Gresham retorted. "No song, no supper." And the dissenting voice was silenced; but the head of the house whispered to Tom at the first convenient opportunity:

"The fact of the matter is that Norman is jealous. Our big fish rose to us, not to him; there's the whole difficulty." And this subtle conclusion dismissed the subject for the time.

All that day Tom was moved to laughter by quaint visions of Jonas Buck among the tombs,

the latest pilgrim to the shrine of Héloïse and Abélard. When night came he found the excellent American stretched out in the hotel courtyard with a glass of whiskey at his side and many sheets of the New York *Herald* strewn around him.

"Well, how was Père Lachaise?" Tom asked.

"Immense! I stayed there all the morning. Look here!" and diving into his pocket, Mr. Buck pulled out a worn envelope upon which he had copied an inscription.

Tom read, aloud :

" NAIÎTRE, MOURIR,
RENAÎTRE ENCORE,
ET PROGRESSER SANS CESSER,
TELLE EST LA LOI."

"Allan Kardec!" said Mr. Buck, in triumph.
"Who the devil was he?"

"A philosopher," Tom vaguely explained.

"Well, that's the finest thing I've visited this day."

"And what else did you visit?"

"The Morgue," said Mr. Buck, sombrely. "Why not?" he continued, ruffled by Tom's uncontrollable fit of laughter. "Ain't that worth seein'?"

"Oh, yes," said Tom, with sudden gravity.
"Go on."

"Then I went up the big steeple—you know—Not-a-dam. Then I was tired—my legs kinder gave out, and I've been here ever since. I guess

I can do the Louvre to-morrow." So upon his statement that he was thoroughly rested now, and ready for a square meal, they went out upon the Boulevard together. "Great folks, ain't they?" he said, in a subdued tone, as he stared at the vista of never-ending lights before him. "What makes 'em advertise spectacles so much? A good many near-sighted ones I suspect."

He had pointed at a theatre pillar, on which all the plays of the night were posted below a glass cornice bearing the illuminated legend: SPECTACLES. Tom, fearing to hurt his feelings by an explanation, let the mistake go, and called his attention to something else. This was not difficult, for Mr. Buck's mind was fast becoming a hopeless jumble of new sensations, the full purport of which he lacked the means to grasp. He devoted himself heart and soul to the dinner which they took at the pleasant restaurant where Tom had eaten his first meal in Paris under the wing of Gresham Mallow. The place had been chosen to-night because of that joyous experience, long past, but never to be forgotten. When coffee and cigars were brought it was still early in the evening, and Tom, still working out his own scheme of reminiscence, suggested that they should look in at the theatre close by, where the music, scenery, and dancing of the new *bouffe-féerie* would amuse his friend even though the dialogue should prove unintelligible. There, consequently, they went, Mr. Buck gazing in dumb surprise at all the strange

ness of the place—the imposing *contrôle* and helmeted *pompier* in the lobby, the wrinkled little *ouvreuse*, with her fluttering pink ribbons, who pounced upon his hat and coat like a bird of prey. The theatre was crowded, but they found in the stalls two places which though far from the scene commanded a good view of it and of the house. There was a dance going on as they came in, and at its last pirouette Mr. Buck applauded vigorously and pronounced the show a good one. The first act was nearly over when the door of a vacant box next the stage flew open for the entrance of Mr. Barclay with a friend, an older man, unknown to Tom. The two made some little stir in seating themselves, and this drew Mr. Buck's attention their way; he clutched Tom's arm expressively, but said nothing. Yet Tom was annoyed to find that throughout the next act his guest occupied himself quite as much with the motionless figures in the box as with the movement of the play. At length, when the curtain had fallen for the second time, Mr. Buck turned upon him with a sigh of relief.

"I've got it!" said he.

"Got what?" Tom inquired.

"That feller's name over there. What do you call him—Barclay? I said 'twa'n't right, and so 'tain't. His name's Manning—he was in the hardware line up our way—used to travel for Winslow Brothers."

"Nonsense; it can't be."

"It *is*, all the same. You can't fool me. His name's Manning or mine's Napoleon Bonaparte."

No argument could shake this conviction in the least, and having settled the point to his own content, Mr. Buck abandoned himself completely to the illusions of the last act, which went merrily on, while Tom, in his turn, now eyed the occupants of the box with an uneasiness that he felt to be absurd. Why should the trivial matter of a chance resemblance, however striking, annoy him for another moment? He would not permit it to distract him further. But the effort by which he arrived at this conclusion was both annoying and distracting too.

Mr. Barclay and his friend were gone when the curtain came down upon splendors of lime-light that dazzled Tom's companion into silence. Speech returned to him in the crowded thoroughfare, but only for vague expression of surprise at finding the street-pageant still played with tireless energy.

"Great folks, I declare!" he murmured. "Seems as though they thought the night was young, don't it?"

"It *is* young," said Tom, suddenly resolved upon a new experiment with his untutored savage. Then, hailing a cab, "To the Mabille!" he ordered.

"What's that?" asked Mr. Buck, as they whirled away.

"A garden," was the quiet answer. If the questioner thought the hour ill-suited to a garden-

party he did not say so. He relapsed into undemonstrative repose, speaking no word, but looking with all his eyes as they followed the Rue de Rivoli to the open pleasure-ground, now twinkling with innumerable lamps that outdid the glory of the stars. But when, descending from the carriage, he turned out of comparative darkness into the full glare of the Jardin Mabille his admiration could no longer be controlled. This was the finest sight yet, from his standpoint, and from any other, in fact, it was an extremely pretty one. Long festoons of colored lights trailed between the trees like the vine-garlands of Italy; there were flower-beds and mossy banks and tiny fountains falling into basins filled with ferns. Light music came from the band-pavilion in the centre under an artificial palm. The place was artfully contrived to make its cramped area look illimitable in extent, and its beauties upon close inspection proved tawdry, forced, unreal as the palm-tree itself; yet the whole was theatrically effective, and to Mr. Buck's overtaxed brain it suggested a dream of Paradise. He dragged Tom about with him from one corner to another, and discovering a shooting-gallery, put ball after ball into the bull's-eye to his own approval and that of the suspiciously war-like soldier in charge, who reaped a harvest in sous. Then they returned to the central floor, where a crowd had gathered around four hired dancers who were just beginning a quadrille of the peculiarly audacious kind for which the gar-

den was long notorious. The men and women, mere professional contortionists in street-dress, carried the suggestion of the dance to the utmost limit allowed by the liberal Parisian law, these antics being rendered all the more startling by their conventional costume. The two Americans moved gradually forward into the inner circle of spectators, where Mr. Buck's face soon became an emotional study, expressing as it did mingled curiosity, amazement, and alarm. His irresolute air and somewhat uncouth attire marking him for a new-comer, he was made, without his knowledge or consent, the central figure of the group, to whom the performers turned contemptuously for approbation; and although this fact escaped him, he grew more and more uncomfortable until the dance was over; then, grasping Tom roughly by the shoulder, he drew him back into the crowd.

"What is it?" Tom inquired. "What do you want to see now?"

"I think we've seen sufficient," he rejoined, curtly. "Let's go home."

"Very good," said Tom, conscious of a stinging reproof in his old friend's tone and manner rather than in his words. And a moment afterward they were out again under the quiet stars.

"Do you visit that place often?" asked Mr. Buck, looking back at its flaring lights as they drove off.

"Oh, when I feel like it," Tom replied, with studied carelessness. "Not very often."

"Well, I'm glad of that, any way."

Tom's indignation burst out at this. "Look here," he said, hotly. "A man is a man ; he must see the world, if he is going to knock about in it. There is no harm in doing that, I say, so long as he behaves himself."

"P'r'aps not," returned Mr. Buck, after a moment's thought. "I'm old-fashioned, I suspect. Never mind me. What street are we in now ?"

Thus evading the disagreeable subject, he talked briskly for a while of what he saw about him. "And where do you live, Thomas ?" he asked.

"Rue Caumartin ; we are coming to it now."

"Is it far from the hotel ?"

"No ; very near."

"Then I'd like to see your rooms. I want to know the way to 'em."

"Good !" said Tom, who had recovered his temper. "So you shall." And he ordered the coachman to turn aside and stop at his door, half-way down the street. While they waited for the concierge to admit them by pulling the cord at his bedside, Tom explained the complicated duties of this watch-dog upon the threshold in every Parisian house. The latch clicked, the door flew open, and Mr. Buck, more impressed than ever by the unreality of foreign things, followed his host up the short flight leading to Tom's quarters in the *entresol*. A fire smouldered upon the hearth, and Tom, after striking a light, stirred up the embers ; then he offered Mr. Buck a cigar.

"No, thank you. I only came to look around. Now I know the way, I guess I'll be going home. It's very snug here, ain't it?"

Upon being urged to stay, he pulled out his watch, and was dismayed by the lateness of the hour. "Good Lord, we *have* had a night of it, haven't we?" he said. "I ain't sat up like this for twenty years. Slumbers light, pony, slumbers light!"

He repeated this kindly wish when Tom went down with him to the carriage, adding that it did his heart good to find his boy so well and happy. Then, leaning forward, he said, in a whisper, evidently that the driver might not overhear him: "But I wouldn't visit that garden place much, Thomas, if I was you."

Tom pressed his friend's hand and turned away, not irritated, but touched by this gentle solicitude concerning his moral welfare. His eyes filled with tears at the thought of home associations, as foreign to him now as this huge uncongenial city was to Mr. Buck. And on his way to bed he murmured:

"Dear old horse! I only wish I were half as good as you!"

CHAPTER II.

VIZARDS TO OUR HEARTS

IN Tom's world, now daily widening, the season, as it happened, was a gay one, and the next morning brought a number of invitations, all to be declined because of Mr. Buck, who, left by day to his own devices, would turn to Tom for support when night came ; the latter, in fact, stood already pledged to this companionship, with its attendant sacrifices, during his old comrade's stay in Paris, which must of necessity be brief. Mr. Buck had demurred a little at first on the ground of becoming a burden and a nuisance, whereupon Tom's genuine regard for him had manifested itself in terms of protest so indignant as to reverse the self-depreciatory judgment without more ado.

The street-lamps were just lighted when Tom left the bank that afternoon on his way to his lodgings, where the two had agreed to meet. At the first corner was an old-fashioned wine-shop of some note in the quarter, frequented by Frenchmen and foreigner alike, during the "absinthe hour," for certain specialties in the way of aromatic drinks that were thought to stimulate the appetite. At the door of this rendezvous now stood Mr. Barclay looking up the street apparently for Tom, to judge

by the change in his expression when they shook hands.

"Come in," he said, "and take a glass of bitters with me. I have just ordered mine. This is lucky. I had you in mind."

In the front of the shop were two or three vacant tables; but Mr. Barclay passed on toward a small counter of unpolished wood worn down by frequent scrubbing that kept it scrupulously clean. A pleasant glow of light glistened upon bottles of all shapes and sizes in marvellous array, and several fine old wine-casks gave the place a look of respectable solidity. Nothing but good wine to be well used could possibly be drawn from such receptacles. Leaning over the counter with his back toward them was a broad-shouldered man whom Mr. Barclay pulled by the sleeve. He turned quickly, straightening himself up as he did so, and Tom discovered in him Mr. Barclay's companion at the theatre on the preceding night. He was well dressed, if somewhat too showily and too youthfully, for his bristling mustache was almost white. He had a puffy, red face, with watery, restless eyes. Nothing in his look or manner could be singled out as positively disagreeable. But Tom, in the swift mental note which we all learn to make upon meeting a stranger, summed him up unfavorably.

"Stewart," said Mr. Barclay, "this is our banker—Sylvester, of Mallow & Co. . Mr. Sylvester, my brother, Mr. Stewart Barclay."

Tom bowed and submitted his hand to the other's heavy grasp, while the speaker continued : "Just over from Halifax—has our business there in charge."

"Ah!" said Tom, whose hasty judgment was somewhat qualified by these details, the relationship in itself being a kind of guarantee. "You have made a long journey."

"Long enough," said the traveller, in a husky voice, stirring the liquor in a tall glass before him and then raising it to his lips without another word.

"Wait a bit, Stewart," said the younger brother, laughing; "we want to drink with you. What will you take, Mr. Sylvester? Vermouth, eh? There you are! Stewart, here's to us, and all of us. Santé!"

"Santé!" echoed Stewart, and drained the glass to its dregs with a long breath of approval. Tom concluded that he had been drinking before, for his hand shook and his reluctance to talk was becoming evident.

But his brother seemed determined to draw him into conversation. "Mr. Sylvester is from the States," he said, with such intention as to force a show of interest.

"What part?" was the reply.

"From New England," said Tom; "Worthingham."

"Don't know it. Much of a place?"

"No; not compared with this one."

Mr. Stewart Barclay was quietly amused at this, but his low laugh had a note of contempt in it. As he did not speak, his relative promptly came to the front again, leading off this time in another direction.

"As I was just saying, Mr. Sylvester, you were on my mind, not to say my conscience. In fact, I meant to call upon you five minutes later. I made off yesterday with some property of yours—quite by mistake. Pray accept my apologies." And Mr. John Barclay produced the missing ivory pencil-case, which Tom for the moment had forgotten.

"Oh, to be sure," he answered, taking back Mr. Hazeltine's gift and working up its point mechanically as he spoke. "I should have been sorry to lose this, but I knew it was in safe hands."

"A little too safe," said Mr. Barclay, laughing; "for I had more than half a mind to keep it. I never saw one exactly of the same sort. Old work, I suppose?"

"Yes, undoubtedly; it was given me, long ago, by a friend—an old one."

"Don't trust me again, that's all," said Mr. Barclay, lightly. "Fill up, won't you?"

Tom excused himself. He must go on, he said; a friend waited for him, by appointment, at his lodgings.

At this speech the elder Mr. Barclay unexpectedly found his own.

"By the way," he began, lounging forward a

step or two, while for this effort the counter served both as support and guide—"by the way, I want a place to swing a cat in. You ought to know where I can find it."

"How much of a place?" Tom asked.

"Well, one room—two or three—I don't care much, it won't be for long; but not too far off. You live in this part of the town, don't you?"

"I live in the Rue Caumartin," said Tom. "That is very near, and it is a street of apartments—fairly good ones. Try number forty-eight——"

"Stop!" said the stranger, fumbling in his pocket for a card, which he found and laid upon the counter. "Write that down, will you?"

"With pleasure." And Tom, using for the purpose the pencil still in his hand, wrote the name of the street, and afterward several numbers slowly, as they came into his mind.

"Forty-eight; and fifty—that's a good house. Thirty; and thirty-six—that's mine; something may be vacant there."

The questioner leaned beside him, watching every stroke of the pencil; then thanked him with a better grace than he had yet shown. "That is a pretty thing," he added, eying the pencil-case curiously. "Would you mind my looking at it?"

As Jerry Hazeltine's gift passed into his hands, Tom noticed that they were white and well cared for, the fingers being small and delicate. He ex-

amined the pencil closely, then returned it, repeating his thanks for the information just given him. His manner was no longer brusque, but simple and conventional; so that when Tom passed out, leaving the brothers about to drink again together, he felt that the elder, like the younger, was none the less a gentleman at heart for having taken a drop too much; and even this proof of weakness did not remain clearly established, since the parting words, irreproachable in the matter of civility, had been spoken soberly enough. Some allowance might well be made for a man newly arrived from the wilds of Nova Scotia. Thus, making all the necessary allowance and more, Tom dismissed the Barclays, elder and younger, from his mind.

It was no matter of great surprise that, a day or two later, Mr. Buck should announce his intention of leaving Paris to take in London, as he said. Over the good Yankee a malady common to all lonely travellers of his age, race, and limited education had been slowly but surely stealing—a mixture of home-sickness, fatigue, and the incessant irritation produced by daily contact with things that he could neither understand nor enjoy. Little details of life assumed vastly uncomfortable proportions; the ways of these folks were never his ways, so far as he could see. Then, too, the separation from his wife distressed him more and more; now that he had “done” the Louvre, the Bois, the tomb of Napoleon, and the Café Américain, he

worried constantly about her health. What was she doing at this hour and that, he wondered, drifting idly back to his hotel to think about it and plunge into the *Herald* file for diversion. The newspaper, always his chief resource, had now become his only consolation; it was dearer to him than his guide-book, dearer even than Tom, whose youthful enthusiasms often forced him into puzzled silence. So, with an "O revoy!" emphasized by a cheerfulness he was far from feeling, he took leave one night, to take the early tidal train the next morning for England. Even if things did not suit, he should know what they were driving at there; there, in London, was a cemetery which Daniel Webster had once visited; there, too, they spoke the Lord's language.

Tom thus found himself free to accept invitations; and Mr. Buck had hardly completed the first lonely mile of his day's journey when there came a note from Mrs. Norman Mallow, asking for Tom's company most unceremoniously the next evening at the Café de la Paix. She and her husband were to dine in a corner of the public room off certain dishes for which the restaurant was famous; there would be a fourth in the party—Miss Vandermere—who would enjoy its informality; in fact, on her account the scheme had been devised. Tom must not fail them; nor did he. Having much to talk about with Una, he accepted eagerly. Then, after his favorable answer was sent off, it occurred to him that a dinner-party of four would afford little

opportunity for an exchange of confidences, and that Mrs. Mallow, nothing if not exacting, with no other man but her husband present, would naturally claim the greater part of his attention for herself. He consoled himself with the thought that she was never dull, in any case; if she now desired his complete devotion, she should have it; only a sense of enjoyment could be the result of filling his allotted place in any enterprise of hers.

The American mail of that morning brought him a few hurried lines from Grip, whose apparent object was merely to discover what had become of the Lisles. A letter to Hannah, written some time ago, had been left unanswered. Could it have gone astray? Did Tom by chance recollect seeing it among others he had forwarded? Tom's latest report of himself had omitted to mention the family at all, but a former one had announced their return to Paris; in which case Hannah's letter, unless it had strangely miscarried, must have been delivered with no undue delay. Not that it especially required an answer; but hearing nothing of their party directly or indirectly, who could say whether they were well or ill? Tom must remember to remove this doubt when he wrote again; and must remember, too, that without some evidence of its loss, he was on no account to speak of the neglected letter, or even to hint at this inquiry concerning it.

"Not that it especially required an answer!"

The truth of this assertion could not be questioned, since Grip asserted it. Yet every line here written betrayed disappointment at the want of that for which there was no need. The letter to Hannah Tom recollected perfectly, for the best of reasons. It had come addressed to him, and he, discovering the mistake in time, had delivered it himself. Then, too, almost before his eyes, Hannah had flung it into the fire at the first glance, unread perhaps—perhaps even unopened. That Grip loved her was as clear now as if he had confessed his love in so many words. That she knew this was almost equally certain. How, then, could she treat him so contemptuously? Was she so shallow as never to have considered him seriously? so thoughtless, so inexperienced as not to know what an inestimable treasure she was flinging away?

Flinging away for what? for whom? He, Tom Sylvester, loved her too; but for him she cared less than nothing; all her looks, words, actions, of late, proved that. Who was the successful rival mysteriously indicated by Una Vandermere at their last meeting? By Una's own statement, however, the warning had been based upon a mere suspicion. Who could say that it was well founded? Women were always suspicious of each other; always ready to work up a romance with the slightest possible materials. This one might be all a mistake growing out of Hannah's disposition to make the most of every new excitement. The best excuse for her seemed the most plausible

as well as the simplest. Her pretty head was turned by too much conquest, and bent solely upon enjoying herself, she had no time to consider consequences. If one man or another took her seriously, that would be his misfortune, not her fault. The thought of one man more than another probably never entered her mind at all.

Loyalty to Grip was the feeling uppermost in Tom's own mind as he walked up the Champs Élysées to call upon Hannah Lisle that afternoon. He did not go out of his way to buy flowers for her this time; all attentions from him, however slight, must be dropped forthwith. He would not compete with his brother, whose position in the matter was now clearly defined, and, for the present at least, his own attitude toward Miss Lisle should be one of mere acquaintanceship. He had a boyish sense of heroism in determining this. Even though his chances of winning her appeared to be of the smallest, to set them all at once aside was still an act of sacrifice. The issue of a love-contest never could be foreseen; the meanest suitor and the noblest stood upon the same plane after all, and the battle was not always to the strong. With one fierce effort the younger brother might overcome the elder—yes, and all other suitors too; but he would not attempt it. That was not the thing to do. The thing was rather to plead Grip's cause, without making this high purpose evident. A word in his favor, let fall now and then as if by chance, might set Hannah to

drawing comparisons that would influence her choice—that is, if she were still free and did not even know her own mind yet, as Tom hoped and believed.

But in turning up the staircase to her door this amiable theory of Miss Lisle's mental processes was suddenly shaken by the remembrance of a former visit, when by a double accident her marked preference for one visitor above another had been detected. That conflicting testimony, coupled with Una's dark suggestions given him on the same day, chilled Tom unpleasantly ; but only for one instant ; in the next his old belief came back with what seemed, by contrast, the glow of happiness itself. The evidence, by no means conclusive, should be taken for what it was worth ; as proving only that, hampered by some previous agreement, she had been unprepared to receive him at that particular hour. It did not, therefore, follow that she had received in his place a favored lover. Why, the man might have been anything else—a tradesman, a mere dealer in *chiffons*, there by appointment, not to be kept waiting. That was it, of course—a dealer in *chiffons* ! So readily do we find excuses for those we love ; so does a hope, formed only to be extinguished, kindle again at a flash of thought whose only origin is the wish to conceive it !

He was doubly fortunate in finding Miss Lisle at home and alone. She had just sealed the last of several letters that were heaped before her on

the writing-table from which she rose to bid him welcome. She had been paying up arrears of correspondence, she explained; it always tormented her. Debts would accumulate, until on some desperate day, like this one, she discharged them all with a rush, incoherently. She hated the labor of writing—how authors endured it, she could not imagine; and with a pen in her hand, all her ideas melted away. But to receive letters was certainly the pleasantest thing in life, especially letters like one here from Clover Stanhope; it had just come, but she had answered it first of all. Tom must listen to this. Then, after reading the passage, she asked if Tom had also heard from home that day.

“Yes,” said Tom, eagerly catching at this opportunity to keep his good resolution. “One letter came this morning—from my brother Guy.”

“Ah!” said Hannah, crossing the room as she spoke, to establish herself upon a sofa in one of the sunny windows. “He is well, I hope.”

“Yes, he is well, I suppose.”

There was something in her visitor’s tone that made Miss Lisle wish to pursue this interesting subject a little farther; but she was very busy with the sofa-cushions, and did not look up as she continued:

“He has been very successful, hasn’t he? They say he is making his fortune.”

“He has had good luck, I believe, so far as that goes.”

Hannah looked up ; then, looking down again immediately, she twisted around her finger one of the ribbons of her dress.

"What do you mean ?" she asked. "You said he was well. Does he write you that he is unhappy ?"

"No," said Tom, emphatically. "He never could write that. If he were suffering tortures, no living soul would ever hear of it from him. I don't think you half know Grip. He is the most generous of men, the most unselfish ; he thinks of himself last always. He is a born hero, if there ever was one. I could tell you things about him that would make you understand this, as you can't now. How should you ?"

"I understand it all," said Hannah, gently. "He is the best fellow in the world."

The words hurt Tom as if they had inflicted upon him a bodily wound. But he made no sign and went on courageously :

"I am glad to hear you say it. I did not think you thought so."

"Why ?" asked Hannah, changing color, in spite of herself, as Tom could not help observing. "Why ?" she repeated, before he had time to speak. "What made you think that ?"

"A little thing ; but little things mean a great deal sometimes. On the day you came back to Paris you had a letter from Grip—do you remember ? I handed it to you."

"Well ?"

"Well, you burned it in the fire there that day. I found one or two bits afterward in the ashes."

Hannah had recovered her self-possession. "Oh," she said, lightly, "I burn my letters always. They take up so much room in travelling; it saves the trouble of packing and repacking them."

"And of answering them, too, no doubt," suggested Tom.

"Sometimes it does," asserted Hannah, with a provoking smile. "Will you hand me that screen, please? The sun shines straight into my eyes."

She pointed toward the writing-table, which was littered with its pretty implements just as she had left them—the blotter, taper, and seal, with the pile of letters ready for the post. There was a small screen, too, of Chinese silk with lacquered handle, and as Tom took it up he could not help seeing his brother's name upon one envelope close beside it. She wanted him to see this, of course; she had sent him there for no other purpose. Well, he had seen it; and he also saw through the little trick which made him distrust her—all the more that she now returned his inquiring look with one of guileless innocence. "Grip's answer goes too late; she is playing fast and loose with him," he thought, as he crossed the room. "If not, let her speak and say so." She did not speak, however; and he stood beside her, awkward and silent for a moment, staring out of the window, then said the first thing that came into his head, as it happened, about the view.

"Isn't it enchanting?" she replied, rising to join him at the window. "This light and air and color; this whirl of the wheels when all Paris is going to the Bois will make a Parisian of me; a good one, they say, is never happy out of sight of Mont Valérien. See those fountains sparkle in the sun. For Paris, write Paradis. Positively, I think I care more for this, just this, than for anything else in the world."

"Yes," thought Tom, "I'll be bound you do!" But aloud he only said: "Paris, glory and infamy of France, the wise man called it; this is certainly its best side."

Miss Lisle did not care to admit that any other view of it was possible. "Look at those superb horses," she went on. "But what a horribly vulgar creature behind them! Who is she, I wonder?"

The creature, a woman of fifty, at least, overdressed in showy colors, reclined upon her cushions with a languid air; her hard features had composed themselves into a look of studied indifference, unvarying, like a mask—as if she were saying to herself: "I and my equipage are faultless; we defy criticism." All passed in a moment; but the air still vibrated with the clatter of hoofs and the tinkle of harness-chains.

"I don't know her," said Tom, while his eyes followed the carriage into the distance. "But she must be American or English, and I am sure she is a good Parisian."

"How cynical you are!" said Hannah, turning back to the sofa again. "As if one need be vulgar to be that! You talk like Una Vandermere."

"That is a compliment," said Tom, as he took his old place. "But what is the matter with Miss Vandermere? I wish you would tell me."

"She is simply bored to death, I think. It does not make her less clever or less amusing; but I would not be like her on any account. By the way, are you going to her father's curio collection, as she calls it—the great reception, I mean, to which the whole colony is asked?"

Tom talked of this and other worldly matters with Miss Lisle for a few moments longer, during which her attention was about equally divided between him and what went on out-of-doors. Then he began to see that her glittering bit of Paris had the better of it. She grew restless; her answers were vague and wide of the mark; she hardly turned his way at all. As he rose to go there came a sharp ring at the door; she sprang up too, and tossed away the hand-screen, which in falling swept her letters from the table to the floor.

"Shall I post these for you?" Tom asked, as he stooped to pick them up.

"Yes, if you will be so kind," she answered, giving him her hand. He fancied that there was a nervous eagerness in her manner and a heightened color in her cheeks. Evidently she was not sorry to have him go. But, as if awakening to a sense of possible incivility, she detained him longer than

was necessary to thank him for coming and to bid him come again. During this small delay he heard the hall-door open and close ; there was no one in the *antichambre*, however, when he passed through it. The second visitor, whoever he was, had been shown into another room ; but there were two hats upon the table, and Tom, taking up the wrong one first, distinguished it from his own by certain gilt initial letters of a name in its crown. He knew the letters well and started at the sight of them. They set him thinking and still controlled his thoughts as he walked on amid all the distraction of the thoroughfare.

“Gresham—Gresham Mallow!” he repeated. “She expected him, and I was in the way. She did not wish me to see him ; she kept me, at the last moment, that we might not meet. He will get her. And Grip?” he added, looking at the letter in his hand. “I would give something to know what she has taken the trouble to tell him. It is a very thin letter ; to announce her engagement, perhaps, before the world hears how she means to make herself a good Parisian. Oh, confound her!”

So, passing one of the trim little branches of the post-office, he shot the letters into it with renewed mutterings of discontent. He was ready now to swear that Hannah’s friendliness was all put on ; that her artlessness was the height of dissimulation. He had not seen the real Hannah Lisle at all, that afternoon, he declared. From first to last she had been playing a part—an unpleasant one.

From which it will appear that the pretty bunch of grapes just out of Mr. Sylvester's reach was not so very tempting after all. The ability, in a lover, to lay this flattering unction to his wounded soul is always a hopeful symptom. We may safely assume that the fox who made the inference immortal neither drowned himself in the brook nor pined away in the slow melancholy of self-starvation.

CHAPTER III.

SHADOWS IN THE GLASS

"THERE is the table for us," whispered Mrs. Norman Mallow to her guests as she led them into the Café de la Paix the next evening; "the corner one, it is the best in the room." And, as though this place of preferment were to be hers for half a lifetime, she established herself upon the leather divan with a triumphant grace, and ascertained that her reflection, of which she had caught unsatisfactory glimpses in the other mirrors, now came out in the nearest one, strong, smiling, and complacent.

The eleventh hour had forced her into a trifling departure from the original plan. Her husband, yielding to a sudden twinge of his malevolent gout, had declared that he must take to his bed; and Gresham, coming in opportunely, disengaged by some miracle, had been secured as substitute—a change which Mrs. Mallow, whose darkest cloud held always a silver lining, considered, upon the whole, advantageous. She had learned to laugh at Norman's bitterest moods, and even found an agreeable excitement in wondering what strange thing he would say or do next; but Miss Vander-

mere might take him more seriously. A little cold water went a long way in a party of four. Gresham's convivial measure, on the other hand, was a well-known quantity; moreover, he was much of an epicure and understood to perfection the browbeating of waiters and the cajoling of cooks by means of tender messages. With Gresham at her elbow, she had not even to suggest that this should be thus and that so; she resigned command of her foraging expedition at once to him.

But for her peculiar self-satisfaction at the happy turn events had taken, the hostess would certainly have noticed that her second cavalier looked pale and tired. Tom had arrived late at the office that morning, after a wretched night, preparing himself, as he hurried in, for Norman's deepest growl of displeasure. But Norman, justly dreading a new access of torment, had stayed at home to stave it off; consequently Tom had found himself at once confronted by three or four good souls whose time was of great value, impatient to ask questions which only one in authority could answer; and these were hardly dismissed, when Mr. Barclay turned up with his promised London acceptances to be examined, entered, credited, and generally put in order for remittance. A provincial banker, having a loan to negotiate, pounced upon Gresham, and the two remained closeted for hours; while with Tom one complicated transaction succeeded another in a breathless whirl. He had been behindhand at the start,

never catching up for a moment in all this nightmare of a day. But the dinner would set him right, he felt sure of that; he had only to sit still and make the most of it in this cheerful company. What right had cares of any kind to hover over a corner table in the *Café de la Paix*?

It was a subscription night at the *Opéra*, and all the mirrored spaces of the restaurant were gradually filling up with the gayest of gay Parisians, who came to dine quickly and well, on the way to the performance next door. While Gresham submitted his scheme for their own dinner to Mrs. Mallow's nods of approval, Tom and Una watched the little groups that formed around them—the men all alike in their black coats, the women in the fullest splendors of full dress, differing so far as the fancy of each and the fashion of all permitted. Many of these were known to Miss Vandermere; others she knew only by sight; but none escaped her satirical notice. She reviewed them all in a descriptive undertone, remarkable for its sweeping condemnation of everything they wore. Tom, at first, attributed this to the great primal cause that no woman likes to be outshone, supplemented by the fact that Una and Mrs. Mallow were in street-dress of the quietest kind. But he had never seen Una look better, and he soon began also to see that all this sarcasm of hers was a mere surface ripple of some deeper feeling.

"What is the matter with you?" he asked, abruptly, after one of her sharp speeches.

"Nothing," she answered, drawing herself up, as if to add: "Look at me and convince yourself!"

Tom did look at her, but remained unconvinced.

"Oh, yes there is," he persisted. "Do you think I am blind? What is it, comrade?"

"Papa and I have had a row, that's all," said Una, with a faint smile, her face relaxing at his last word. "Let us say no more about it. Truffles, yes," she replied to Mrs. Mallow, who suddenly turned their way. "I like them."

Miss Vandermere occupied the seat upon the divan beside her hostess; and the men had chosen places at either hand, leaving the front of the table free with an unobstructed view to all. While Mrs. Mallow followed the mysterious truffle back to its original chestnut forest and debated with Una the laws of its being, Gresham, leaning forward, spoke to Tom in a nervous whisper.

"Did you hear what that fellow said?" he asked. "There—just at your left."

"No," said Tom. "What was it?"

"A late bulletin from London," Gresham whispered. "Some trouble in Turkey."

Tom started. He was not a partner in the house, and, never consulted about investments, had but a vague idea of its resources. He, however, remembered perfectly Marmaduke's coming to Paris to talk over their stock in Turkish railways. They had held on, he knew that; though the extent of their holding he did not know.

"Marmaduke may have sold," he whispered back.

"Perhaps," said Gresham, more calmly. But he shook his head, as though the hope were inadmissible; then he turned to the waiter and asked him to buy an evening paper. When this came the dinner was already well advanced. Gresham, now thoroughly master of himself, merely glanced at the bad news and tossed it away, showing no further sign of anxiety. Tom, of course, did his best not to intrude any doubts and cares upon the company. Mrs. Mallow laughed on, and under the enlivening influences of the hour the others soon contrived to catch the pace she set. By the time the truffles were served, all four of the party might have exemplified the truth of the good Italian proverb, that at table one forgets to grow old.

The stir of a new arrival behind him brought Tom's eyes to bear upon the mirror opposite. Slowly passing across it toward one of the vacant tables came three or four merry figures, one of which, a woman's, he instantly remembered. She was, surely, the same overdressed and objectionable matron whom he had seen the day before from Miss Lisle's window. He thought her now not only "horribly vulgar," as Hannah had said, but also ridiculous, and he was on the point of stating these views recklessly when he saw in Gresham's face the light of recognition. The woman saw it too, and she repaid it with the friendliest of smiles. After taking her place in a distant part of

the room, she still kept her eyes and apparently her thoughts fixed upon the Mallow party. All this Tom observed in the glass and congratulated himself upon his silence, especially as Gresham, begging to be excused for that purpose, now rose and crossed the room to speak to the new-comer. Mrs. Mallow put up her eye-glass and watched his movements with a quiet smile.

Tom's curiosity became uncontrollable.

"Do you know that woman?" he asked.

"Only by sight," said Mrs. Mallow. "We have no calling acquaintance—yet."

"I know her by sight, too," said Tom. "Pray tell me who she is."

"I don't wonder that you ask. What caricatures we English make of ourselves! She is Mrs. Brisbane, the widow of a rich manufacturer in Manchester or Birmingham. I say rich for want of a better word. She has mints of money—all to be had for the asking."

"I see. That makes her interesting."

"Yes. What kind of a husband can she buy with her shower of gold? that is the question; some miserable Frenchman, probably, who has a title to offer. Fancy her a baronne or a marquise! Meanwhile, I call her Gresham's widow—it's an old joke between us. How she smiles upon him! Positively, my dears, I tremble. Ought I to interfere? They are making eyes at each other like Romeo and Juliet. It's too dreadful."

"Romeo is old enough to take care of himself,"

said Una, laughing ; “ and Juliet might almost be his mother.”

“ Don’t laugh, dear, don’t ! ” cried Mrs. Mallow, carrying the joke a little farther in a mockery of distress. “ Think of her as my sister-in-law, and pity me ! ” Then to Gresham, who returned to his place, she added, audaciously : “ Well, is she going to marry you ? ”

“ Perhaps,” said Gresham, echoing the sarcastic note without a moment’s hesitation — “ when I am ready to marry her. The elopement takes place to-night, at ten o’clock, from the Porte Maillot. Will you come ? ”

Mrs. Mallow laughed scornfully ; then, anxious to change the subject, she was reminded by the Porte Maillot of a story connected with the siege. This led to a similar one on Gresham’s part, to another and still another which the ices suggested. He had been shut up in Paris during half the melancholy winter ; he had seen much and heard more ; he could give his points, therefore, the air of reality in a very entertaining way. Tom, by intelligent questions, urged him on, glancing now and then at Una for support. At first she seemed deeply interested, but soon it became evident that the interest had lapsed. Her eyes turned from Tom’s, and he could not bring them back ; there was an odd look in her face, half of trouble, half of embarrassment ; it was doubtful if she heard one syllable of all that Gresham said. Something had occurred to distract her attention and to hold

it in check. What? Tom had no sooner asked himself the question than he beheld its answer thrust upon his sight, reflected in the glass and driving all other reflections from his mind.

Alone at a small table a long way off sat the Baron de Rozières. He had dined elsewhere, no doubt, or Tom must have noticed him before; he had come in to devote a spare half-hour to the *feuilleton* of a newspaper over his coffee and his cognac between the puffs of his cigar. His reading appeared to absorb him, and no consciousness of Una's presence could be detected in his impassive face, which so disturbed hers. Tom, discreetly ignoring the change that had come over her, as well as the obvious cause of it, was glad to see that in a few moments she recovered her self-possession. He recalled his own, which had wavered perceptibly; and when the last story was finished, both he and Miss Vandermere met all the requirements of the situation with a show of ease. Their temporary abstraction had been apparent neither to Gresham nor Mrs. Mallow, he felt sure; the story-telling had happily prevented that; happily, too, Gresham made no attempt to cross-examine the audience upon the subject-matter of his discourse; and Mrs. Mallow's restlessness now suggesting a stroll upon the Boulevard, all rose to go.

In passing out Tom turned to glance at the tall Frenchman, who was still busy with his paper. Mrs. Mallow had taken Gresham's arm, and Tom

offered Una his, which she accepted silently. Ten steps from the door was a brilliant shop-window displaying foreign photographs in great profusion. Involuntarily they stopped in the glare of it, and Mrs. Mallow explained that she liked nothing better than to "*flâner*" in this way, looking leisurely at one window after another. The crowd jostled them a little as it brushed by. Did the others mind that? If so, they would move on directly. No; the others did not mind it, but would follow her lead. So they waited there for some moments longer until her idle curiosity was thoroughly gratified, and then, falling back into the crowd, went along with it toward the Boulevard des Italiens, where other and better windows were to be seen. Tom tried to make Una talk, but could extract only a beggarly account of monosyllables. As they stood still on one of the *asiles* in the Place de L'Opéra, waiting to cross, he almost lost his patience. The golden cornice of the opera-house was all aflame; light and color stretched away to right and left before them and behind them; they were at the central point of all the fascinating *mouvement de Paris*; but Una would not yield to it; she was not "in the movement" at all.

"I can't talk to you," said Tom, in despair. "You are a hundred miles away."

"Not so far as that," she sighed; "and now I have come back, but——" She left the sentence unfinished, debated with herself for a moment, and

then adding in a different tone, "Read this!" she put a card into his hand.

The clustered lights overhead enabled Tom to see that it was a visiting-card of Monsieur le Baron Honoré de Rozières, on which had been hastily scrawled in pencil :

"Please find yourself to-morrow, at one, in the Galerie de la Madeleine."

"When did you get that?" he asked, handing back the message as soon as they were safe on the opposite sidewalk, a few feet behind the others.

"Just now, when we stopped before the window. He put it into my hand."

"And you permitted yourself to take it!" was Tom's reproachful thought. But he only said aloud: "Well, you will not find yourself there."

"Why not?"

"Because—if you don't know, I can't tell you."

Una shrugged her shoulders.

"I don't care," she said; "I shall go."

"Do you care for him, then, so much as that?"

"My father leaves me no choice," replied Una, evasively. "He refuses to let me receive Monsieur de Rozières at home. We had a pitched battle over it this afternoon—one of many. Now he must take the consequences."

"And are you prepared to take them for the sake of Monsieur de Rozières?"

"Perhaps."

"You have changed your mind, then, since the night of the opera-ball."

He looked hard at her as he said this, but she would not meet the look.

"Men are all alike; he is no worse than others," she answered, coldly.

"Ah! indeed! His reputation is singularly unjust, then," Tom protested. But to this Una made no answer. The others had called a halt before another window, and while they looked she and Mrs. Mallow compared notes upon its contents.

"You must not go to the Galerie de la Madeleine to-morrow," said Tom, when they resumed their walk.

"Must not? Pray, what business is it of yours?"

"You have forced me to make it my business. I shall prevent your going."

"Prevent it? How?" she demanded, angrily.

"If you go, I go too, that's all."

"No, no; you must not do that," Una pleaded; "he would see you—he would recognize you."

"Let him! Are you out of your senses? To meet him, of all men, there alone! What would people say who saw you?"

"What they pleased. The Americans are a free people. As Mam'zelle says, 'I am emancipated.'"

"So am I—and I shall walk in the Galerie de la Madeleine to-morrow. It is a charming place; I like it."

Una did not speak, but her arm trembled; she

was in a passion, he knew. Again they stopped, and went through the form of looking at a show of things for which neither cared a jot. Then they walked on in troubled silence, which Una broke unexpectedly.

"Tom!"

"Well?"

"I think you are right. I ought not to go there to-morrow."

"Good. I am sure I am right."

"And you won't go either, will you? I don't want to have him see you."

"Certainly not, if you give me your word that you are not going."

"Very well, then, I will."

"Your word of honor?"

"My word of honor!"

"Thank you," said Tom, much relieved. "That is what I call a camaraderie."

"Mentor!" said Una, with a nervous laugh. "It is all papa's fault. If he had not abused the Baron so outrageously I should never have made a point of defending him."

This specious plea for partisanship, if intended to set Tom's mind at rest, did not quite fulfil its purpose. But he only said:

"I don't know the man, and can't pretend to judge him. About the other matter, though, I am convinced, and I am glad to have convinced you."

"Hush!" whispered Una, as Mrs. Mallow broke in.

"Do see that lovely Vernis Martin! Isn't it exquisite? Una, dear, you look tired—and I am tired, too. Suppose we turn, or, better still, drive back. Gresham, find us a carriage, please."

They took the first that came, and drove to the Avenue Marigny, where the party was disbanded. Gresham kept the carriage and escorted Mrs. Mallow home in it, while Tom walked down alone. He crossed by the pompous Rue Royale to the square of the Madeleine, now silent and deserted; through this, taking the shortest cut homeward, he passed the little fountain in the corner, and beyond it the entrance of a long, narrow arcade, one of many in Paris; its shop-windows were all closed, and one flaring gas-light overhead made the dark vista dimly visible.

"The Galerie de la Madeleine," said Tom, smiling, as he looked along it, at the odd little coincidence which by no conscious thought of his had turned his steps that way. "What does Una mean by playing so with fire?" was his graver thought as he went on. "She knows that fellow well enough. Yet she risked one scandal to break with him, and now she would have risked another to get him back. She is absolutely reckless. How does he keep his hold upon her? Is it mere obstinacy, or something worse? Does she love him in spite of herself? It can't be, and yet—— It's bad business, very bad; but I can do nothing more."

The evening had given him much to think about, and upon going to bed, he slowly reviewed its inci-

dents, one by one. "That telegram from Turkey!" thought he; "I meant to buy a paper and look it up. No matter. It will keep. Gresham did not seem to care."

But at that moment Gresham, in the little telegraph office under the Grand Hotel, was knitting his brows over a long cipher-message to Marmaduke in London.

CHAPTER IV.

THE EDGE OF A PRECIPICE

THE news from Turkey, promptly confirmed the next day, proved most discouraging. The government had flatly refused to meet certain of its obligations, and all Turkish securities known to the London market had, in consequence, fallen many points. In fact, Marmaduke reported them unsalable for the time being; he had held on, as Gresham had feared. He was not to be blamed for this, since no human being could have foreseen that affairs would take a disastrous turn so suddenly; but the fact remained that Mallow & Co. had borrowed money upon practically worthless property, on which the loans were now called in. Gresham took Tom into his confidence immediately that morning, explaining the whole matter over again in detail to Norman, who turned up a little later. The brothers agreed in thinking that the position, though grave, was not desperate; they would do all that was possible in the way of remittances to London, and hope for the best; and Tom could not sufficiently admire Norman's forbearance. He had disapproved of the investment, as Tom perfectly well remembered; but he wasted

no time in vain reproaches. He did not even say "I told you so;" on the contrary, his one thought seemed to be a determination to meet the issue with a cheerful face.

Cipher-telegrams flew thick and fast all the morning, which otherwise, to Tom's comfort, was unusually quiet. But not caring to be long away, when twelve o'clock came he bolted his breakfast in the worst American ten-minute fashion and hurried to his post again. "Somebody is waiting for you," was the word as he passed in to find the Vicomte de Marsan, who met him with a pleasant smile.

"I am on my way to breakfast at the Maison Lucas," said the visitor. "Will you come with me?"

Tom excused himself. He had already breakfasted. He could not well be absent—he was alone.

"Les affaires avant tout, Monsieur Sylvestre," returned the other, amiably. "May I have a word with you here, since we are alone?"

"Enchanted, monsieur," said Tom, drawing their chairs together. "What am I to buy for you?"

The Frenchman shook his head.

"Nothing," he replied, still smiling, but coloring too in marked confusion. "To-day I want only advice. But as my affairs are wholly of the heart, I must make a father-confessor of you."

"Of the heart!" Tom repeated in undisguised astonishment. "Pray go on, monsieur. Confess!"

"Monsieur, I love one of your charming nation, and I desire to make her an offer of marriage. But I do not precisely know how to set about it. Your customs differ from our own, and——" he hesitated.

"I see. She has relatives in Paris," interposed Tom, now deeply interested.

"Pardon me, I should have told you. It is Mademoiselle Vandermere."

Tom held out his hand with a cry of joy.

"I am so glad," he said, simply.

"Thank you," returned the Vicomte, shaking his hand warmly. "It is as if I had won her. But, alas, I have not yet. How shall I best proceed to do this? Shall I go to her father and make my demand with due formality, or shall I speak first with mademoiselle herself? My ignorance is much at fault, and a false step might ruin all. This is the advice I ask of you."

"I understand," Tom answered. Then, after a pause, he added: "I suppose she does not know."

"Precisely. I fear, indeed, that she does not even suspect."

There was another pause, during which the penitent studied his father-confessor with anxious eyes.

"Were it my case, monsieur," said Tom, at last, "I am sure that I should speak first with her. And I advise you to do the same."

"Ah! As I imagined!"

"But not too hastily. Make her discover your position for herself, if you can. This is Friday. You will go to-night to the Avenue Marigny?"

"Assuredly. This is the night of their great reception."

"Very well. To-night, then, you may make the first advances. You can judge then yourself what to do next. If I can help you, count upon me. That is what I advise."

The Vicomte rose and shook Tom's hand again. "Ah, monsieur," he said, "I shall not forget this kindness. Believe me, I am most grateful: *Au revoir, cher Monsieur Sylvestre—mon cher ami!*"

"If Una will only take him," thought Tom, as the Vicomte, with a light heart, went away to his breakfast. "It was not for nothing that I scored one point against the Baron last night. But a little more of this will make a matrimonial agent of me. I ought to have charged the Vicomte a commission." So, jocosely dismissing Una and her love affairs, he turned to other things; yet the thought of her came back repeatedly during the next hour, at the end of which the door opened and she stood before him. He went forward to receive her, wondering at this visit, and without question expressing the wonder in his eyes.

"It is nothing," she said; "I came to remind you that we receive the world to-night. You will remember?"

"Of course," he answered, more surprised than ever. "Is that all?"

"No," replied Una, now radiant with malicious satisfaction. "I have been there."

Tom's mind refused to act.

"Where?" he demanded.

"Don't be obtuse—to the Galerie de la Madeleine."

"What! You broke your word?"

"Didn't you drive me to it? What else was I to do?"

"I was a fool to trust you!" cried Tom, losing all patience. "You gave me your word of honor last night; and this morning you have met that rascal—have walked with him and talked with him."

"I believe you do not know the man," said Una, with unnatural calmness. "I met Monsieur de Rozières openly. We walked and talked together; voilà tout!"

"Thank you for telling me," returned Tom, indignantly. "Perhaps you will also tell me why you chose to meet him—openly."

"Because he had something to say which I desired to hear; because it was forbidden, and I am fond of disobeying orders. Why is it that I have a mortal love of walking on the edge of a precipice? That I can't tell you, but it has been so always. This time I have taken my walk and no harm comes of it. The danger is past. I have confessed too—why else am I here? And you need not be so brutal."

But Tom would not be soothed.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," he declared. "No harm? How can you tell that? If your father should have seen you!"

"But he didn't," said Una, smiling. "You shall not scold me for nothing. No one saw me." So, still smiling, she met his angry look. Though very simply dressed, she was in black, which always became her best, and her beauty irritated Tom the more.

"Do you mean to say," he continued, sharply, "that you had the place to yourselves?"

"Yes—to all intents and purposes. At this hour there is no quieter place in Paris. Only a few stupid Frenchmen in the Café Lucas could possibly have noticed us."

Tom's face darkened in a way she could not understand.

"The Café Lucas!" he said, in a low voice.

"Yes. What of it?"

"The Café Lucas!" he repeated, more, apparently, to himself than to her. "It opens into the Galerie de la Madeleine."

"It does; and what of that?"

"Nothing—nothing at all. Since you run such risks for Monsieur de Rozières, I have no more to say."

"Very well, then," said Una, drawing herself up, "let me say, Mr. Sylvester, that you are absurd, unreasonable, idiotic——"

"Possibly."

"To judge me so—without knowing the facts."

"Facts! You deceived me shamefully. There are no other facts."

"You are very rude, too, and very ill-tempered."

"What else can you expect?" asked Tom, shrugging his shoulders.

"I expect nothing," she returned, enraged at his indifference. "I have done with you. I don't know what you think of me—I don't care——"

"So it seems."

"And that is all I have to say to you." She had moved toward the door as she spoke, and now she darted out of it. Already half repenting his persistent harshness, Tom followed, but only in time to see her disappear through the outer arch of the little courtyard. She was gone.

In a white heat Tom rushed back to fling himself down at his desk and strike it fiercely with his clenched hand.

"It is maddening," he muttered, "and I should like to smash things! If the Vicomte has seen her with that man, he will never forgive her—never ask her to be his wife; he will refuse to understand, and so do I. She loves De Rozières blindly, and he has made the most of his advantages. She is throwing herself away, while we look on, grinding our teeth, unable to prevent it. Heaven help her, that's all!"

The afternoon was cold and gray, with threatening skies that indicated the approach of a storm. Night settled down, and the office lamps were lighted early. Of the gloomy hours during which

Tom struggled to close up that day's work satisfactorily he could afterward recall very little. One uncomfortable fact alone stood out above the others: the sum which he had counted upon sending to London to relieve the pressure there was much curtailed by an unexpected draft of Mr. John Barclay for a large amount. According to their agreement the man had a perfect right, of course, to draw all this and more if he pleased; but Tom earnestly wished that his amiable friend had chosen a more convenient moment. There was no help for this, however; the obligation came in its proper course and must be met in spite of Turkey. So Tom drew down his balance as low as he dared for the benefit of London, and added a line to explain why his resources were thus reduced. The Mallows composed together in whispers a long letter of instructions to Marmaduke, which Tom did not see. Together they went away, still whispering, yet nodding good-night so cheerily that Tom's own anxiety seemed baseless. "It is nothing," he said, as he closed his desk, and followed them. "To-morrow will be a light day, as Saturday always is; next week we shall look back at this and laugh at it. All houses have their cares, all men, all lives; the glory of living is to conquer them."

The brightness of the streets cleared his mind to-night of troublesome business details, as it had done on many other nights before this one. But as he left the Boulevard for the quieter Rue Caumartin, the thought of Una's perverseness came

back to him unpleasantly. "And I can do nothing," he thought; "it is no business of mine. She must go her own way. And yet, if I could stop her! If there were someone to consult who could be trusted! Ah! Mademoiselle de Champfleury! Why not? She is the very person, and we are to meet to-night. Good! That is the thing to do!"

The little flagged hall of his house was lighted by a gas-jet above the key-board. On a shelf below candles for the various lodgers were already set out for the night. Tom took his key, chose his candle and lighted it; then looked through a small pile of letters, none of which were for him; but close beside them lay two telegrams, both addressed to "Monsieur Sylvestre." The first was a city message, signed with a name well known in the American colony, begging him to fill a vacant place at dinner on the following night. The second proved to be utterly incomprehensible, though written in the plainest English. Its words were merely :

"Good-evening.

"John."

Tom read this twice before he saw that it came from London. Then he laughed at his own stupidity. "There is some mistake," he said; "it is not for me." Yet the name was certainly "Sylvestre." The street number upon the back, however, looked more like "30" than "36." There undoubtedly lay

the clew to the blunder. "Strange," he continued, "that I should have a near neighbor of my own name without knowing it—one who speaks English, too! Well, I'll bid him 'good-evening' on my way to dinner."

The staircase wound up directly to Tom's door, which was the only one upon the small landing of the *entresol*, where all was dark, there being no gas above the ground floor. A window opposite the door looked upon a court common to this and the adjoining houses. As Tom's key turned in the lock the window was stealthily opened and a man entered by it; the door flew open at the same moment and in the sudden draught Tom's candle went out; but not before he had identified the man as Mr. Stewart Barclay.

Tom took a step backward into the room with a cry of surprise. "Mr. Barclay!" he stammered.

The other pushed him in roughly, and following upon the instant, shut the door and put his back against it. "Barclay be damned!" he whispered. "My name is Tom Sylvester."

CHAPTER V.

THE POWERS OF DARKNESS

A FIRE on the hearth burned dimly, but a street-lamp at the window-level threw pale, flickering light over the two men's faces. Tom's, white as death, expressed only blank amazement; while he tried in vain to speak, his look and his silence were alike misinterpreted.

"You don't believe me, eh?" continued his unwelcome visitor. "Your mother's name was Valentine. Her sister married my brother, Mark Sylvester. You have a brother and a sister too—or had them. I am not lying, you see. The pencil-case you carry was Jerry Hazeltine's, and——"

"Stop!" began Tom, in the dull, clouded speech of a man who is dreaming. "I did not doubt it. You forged my uncle's name and ran away. What do you want with me?"

"So they told you, curse 'em!" his father growled in answer. "Well, no matter; I want nothing of any consequence. Draw those curtains, will you? Quick! Give me the candle."

Snatching it as he spoke, he moved toward the fireplace to get a light. On the candlestick lay a folded paper—the mysterious telegram from Lon-

don, which he opened and read with defensive acuteness, crouching at the hearth. "Damnation!" he muttered, tossing the paper into the blaze and half turning uneasily as he did so. But Tom at the windows, obeying him mechanically, saw nothing, heard nothing, and for the moment had forgotten the existence of such a message.

When the curtains were drawn, Tom Sylvester, the elder, lighted the candle, and from it two others that stood upon the mantel-piece on either side of the clock. "Just six!" said he; "there is half an hour to spare." His hands were covered with dust, and one of them was torn and bleeding. His clothes, too, showed dusty patches which he nervously tried to brush off as he continued speaking.

"A tough job I had of it, to do sixty feet of string-course holding on by the shutters. No matter; I did it," he chuckled.

"Why?" gasped Tom, whose senses were still benumbed.

"To use your door instead of mine; it's more convenient."

"I don't understand. Explain yourself."

"I'll explain in two words; but give me something to drink first. I am drier than desolation."

Tom found a bottle and a glass, and set them before him silently. He poured some liquor out, raised it to his lips and stopped. "You're not drinking? No? Here's health, then!" he said, and gulped it down.

"Well?" insisted Tom, tingling now with impatience.

"Well, they've spotted me, worse luck. I ran into a fellow hanging about Barclay's door just now. They're at my door already for aught I know, and I need your help. The fact is, Tom, that I am wanted by the police."

Tom, now thoroughly himself again, came straight to the point. "For what?" he asked, coldly. "Another forgery?"

"No! No! Don't look at me like that! This is an old affair, a mere nothing—a matter of cards, that's all. A few friends of mine played at my rooms sometimes; but their laws here are infernally strict. I got into trouble. I had to light out. Don't make any mistake, my boy! I have been down, way down—low, I acknowledge it. But that's all over, I give you my word. I must not be set back; I am doing my best to get up again, as Barclay knows. You know Barclay. He has treated me nobly, like the royal good fellow he is."

"Like a brother," said Tom, contemptuously.

"Don't blame Barclay for that. The fault was mine—I did it. When you and I met face to face so suddenly, I begged him to call me by any name but yours. I meant that you should never know, until I had some better record to wipe out the other. I could not foresee this. Don't blame Barclay—blame me, I deserve it. But, for God's sake, get me out of this; for God's sake, Tom!"

His whining voice broke ; he dropped into a chair and covered his face with his hands. The confession had in it the simplicity of truth ; the passionate appeal was too strong to be resisted, and as he crossed the room to lay his hand gently upon his father's shoulder, tears rose in Tom's eyes and blinded him.

"I don't know what you want," he said ; "but I will help you if I can."

Without looking up the father caught his son's hand and pressed it. "God bless you, boy," he sobbed ; "God bless you !"

But from this closer contact Tom disengaged himself with a movement of aversion. "What am I to do ?" he asked, drawing away.

"Hark !" cried the other, springing to his feet in sudden fear. Then for a few seconds they listened breathlessly to a step in the hall outside the door ; the sound passed on, however, up the staircase. Yet even when all was quiet again, the fugitive still trembled, and he took another draught from the bottle before speaking.

"I must get rid of this," he said, drying his mustache hastily upon his sleeve. "Give me soap and a razor if you have one. Good !" he added, as Tom, leading the way to an inner room, produced his shaving materials. "Now then, send for a carriage as quickly as possible. I am off for Italy in the *Rapide* at seven-fifteen. You will go with me to the station ; I need your help, and especially your company. Starting from your door,

with you, I shall put the devil and all his angels off the scent. Do you see?"

A crafty smile, as he asked this, gleamed through the lather with which his face was already overlaid.

"Is that all you want?" Tom inquired in a tone of relief, as he paced the room uneasily.

"Everything, and, as I said before, it's nothing much. Call your concierge and send him for the carriage. I shall be ready by the time it comes. Shut the door between the rooms and then the man won't see me till my face is put in order. We can't be too careful."

Unhesitatingly, Tom obeyed these instructions; but when the carriage was ordered, and he waited on alone in the outer room, a guilty consciousness of wrong-doing began to assert itself. As he strode back and forth, starting at every sound in the street, this enforced partnership to which he had yielded so readily grew more and more distasteful to him. Why go on with it, he argued? Why not open the door and tell the man to shift for himself? No; the man was his father. If his story were true, he was now less to be blamed than pitied—and he asked so little, after all. But if the story were false? if there were something more behind it, no mere misdemeanor, but a crime, freshly committed? Still the man was his father. Why think the worst and not the best of him? He would keep his promise, help him to get out of Paris, ask no more, think no more. Hark! What was that?

The carriage—only the carriage. But he was trembling like a leaf, hot and cold by turns. No wonder his nerves were shaken ; he must drink a little to steady them.

Had any lingering doubt of the man's identity remained in Tom's mind, it must have been set at rest by the strong likeness to his Uncle Mark, revealed in the lines of the shaven lip. Yet the likeness was not a pleasant one. The face had been greatly changed, but not improved by the simple means employed to disguise it, and from its confident smile Tom recoiled, shivering. To this instinctive expression of distrust his father, however, paid not the smallest heed, but swooping down upon the bottle half choked himself in his eagerness to leave no drop behind ; then pointing at the clock, he said : " We've no time to waste. Are you ready ? "

" Yes. "

" Come on then. The Café Cardinal is on the way. Tell your man to drive there ; it's safer. "

They met no one in the passage, and the concierge did not even look up as they went by his window. The dim street seemed to all intents and purposes deserted. They climbed into their victoria, and were whirled away unmolested in a free, straight course that soon lost itself in the crowded Boulevard. Neither spoke until the Café Cardinal came in sight, at the corner of the Rue de Richelieu.

" Are we to stop here ? " Tom inquired.

"No," said the other; and, leaning forward before their speed was checked, he countermanded emphatically the former order. "Drive like all the devils to the Lyons Railway Station, and a good *pourboire* to you!"

"*Bien, monsieur,*" returned the man, cheerily. So they turned the corner and dashed along the historic street, by one landmark after another—the Library, the *Fontaine Molière*, the *Théâtre Français*, the *Louvre*; faster now, for a mile or two of the interminable *Rue de Rivoli*; then, at the *Tour St. Jacques*, a sharp turn to the right brought them out upon the quay, where, though the pavement was rough, they met with fewer obstacles, and their pace held its own furiously. The hurry of all this was unfavorable to conversation. Tom did not care to talk, and his father, staring straight before him, had thus far remained rigid as a graven image. Now, however, Tom perceived that he appeared to breathe more freely; he even turned in his seat and looked behind them, cautiously at first, then with a degree of assurance.

"So far, so good," he muttered. "Now, if all goes well at the station— Five minutes more and we are there," he continued, fumbling in his pockets for a roll of bank-notes, which he found at last and passed over to Tom. "When we arrive pay this fellow and discharge him; then take your place in the line and buy me a ticket for *Genoa*—first class, of course—there is no other on the *Rapide*. When you get it, look for me on the right in

the farthest corner, but not before ; mind what I tell you, we don't belong together until then. Here's the money. Do you see ? ”

“ Yes,” said Tom ; “ and after that ? ”

“ After that I shall take the train and make the best of my way to the frontier. That ends it ; you will have me off your hands.”

“ And you, in Genoa—what are you going to do ? ”

“ Live like a gentleman, if they let me alone ; if not, God knows what. But don't distress yourself. I shall not trouble you any more.”

“ It's not that, but——”

“ But what ? ” his father insisted, sharply. “ You've done me a good turn, and I'm grateful. Let me go my way without any damned nonsense. I'm no credit to you. I've done you harm—more than you dream of.”

“ Whatever you may have done,” replied Tom, “ you are my father. If you need my help again, let me know it.”

“ Your father, yes, for want of a better one,” returned the elder Tom Sylvester, gloomily. “ You're too good a fellow to be a son of mine. If I have hurt you, I am sorry. Don't forget that, as I shan't forget you. When the worst comes to the worst, think the best you can of me—the best of a bad lot. Let it go at that, Tom. We can't hitch horses ; I've made my bargain, and I must stick to it. Be thankful its not yours, and let it go at that, I tell you.”

He relapsed into uncompromising silence, which Tom had not the heart to break. The moments flew, and flying with them their carriage presently drew up in all the glare and tumult of the station-yard. "On the right, remember!" whispered the father in the son's ear, and leaping down he disappeared in the crowd of arrivals that already encircled them; while Tom, obeying instructions to the letter, paid the coachman a double fee and immediately pressed on to await his turn at the ticket-seller's window.

The line moved forward slowly in charge of a uniformed official, acting as interpreter to the foreigners, whose ignorance of the language and currency would otherwise have led to intolerable delay. Little by little Tom drew nearer, idly watching in this snail's progress the waiting-room barrier through which all the passengers must pass. Suddenly there was unusual commotion at it, and the passage became for the moment blocked; then from the room beyond came two men holding a third in custody. This little group hurriedly crossed the great hall of the station and went out, attended by a swarm of curious spectators; but not before Tom, to his surprise, had discovered in the prisoner his former corresponding clerk, Leroux.

"What does that mean?" he asked the interpreter, at whose elbow he now found himself.

"Who knows?" replied the man, with a shrug of indifference. "An affair of the police, evi-

dently; they have caught their bird on the wing. Where does monsieur go? Genoa? Cent-cinquante sept-quinze, monsieur, pour Gênes!"

Wondering vainly what crime his former associate could have committed, Tom strolled leisurely toward the place appointed by his father for their meeting. There was no hurry; the great clock showed that fully ten minutes must elapse before the train's departure; but his discreditable namesake was nowhere to be seen. At first he thought nothing of this, merely strolling up and down on the watch, keeping always in view a vacant bench in the quiet corner where the man should be. But when the seconds had recorded themselves as minutes and only five of these were left, Tom grew uneasy. Something must have occurred to change his father's plan; perhaps, avoiding the barrier, he had contrived in some irregular way to reach the platform, and had already taken his place in the train. To the platform therefore, using his ticket as a passport, Tom hurried, through the huge dingy waiting-room, now given over to the railway attendants. In the carriages beyond many passengers had settled down for their long journey; the guards ran to and fro, hurrying in the late-comers and slamming the doors upon them. Tom rushed up the line, straining his eyes at every window, but in vain. Some of the forward compartments, not fully occupied, could be dismissed with a single glance; and in passing a door that still stood open he saw,

seated inside, two women, one of whom was closely veiled; the other looked up as Tom turned away, flashing into his mind the certainty of having seen her face before, he could not tell where. A few steps more brought him to the end of the train without a sign of his father. Then, as he turned back, the figure of a man known to him by sight passed into the carriage he had just distinguished from the others by that vague remembrance. The door closed, the train began to move, and as it glided by, this same man leaned from the window to throw away his cigar, which fell almost at Tom's feet. There could be no doubt of positive recognition in his case. It was the Baron de Rozières.

"So he is off for the South," muttered Tom, while the train dwindled to a point of light and then vanished in the darkness. "With whom, I wonder? Where have I met that woman? I cannot think. No matter; it is a comfort to know that he is out of Paris."

It would have comforted him still more to know that his father was out of Paris likewise. Though he looked here, there, everywhere, still no trace whatever of the man could be discovered for all his pains. The whole incident already seemed remote and illusory; but for the ticket to Genoa, a few pieces of silver and one bank-note out of the roll which had been handed him, he might almost have persuaded himself that the powers of darkness had combined to juggle with his senses, and that in some state of mental obscurity he had wandered

away to wake at the Lyons Railway Station from a painful dream. He was wide awake now, at all events, and faint from hunger and fatigue; so, turning out of the station-yard into the nearest café, he dined there alone with a score or two of strangers, and scrutinized all who came and went, half fearing, half hoping to find his father's face among them.

With the same alternation of hope and fear, when the lonely meal was over, Tom drove back to his lodgings. What if his father had returned before him? But no; he stood alone in the place, surrounded by all the vestiges of their hurried flight. There was the disordered dressing-table, here the bottle and glass, both empty. What was that bit of paper on the floor? Only his dinner invitation, just where it had dropped and lain neglected. Then recalling the other message, the incomprehensible one, for which he now looked vainly high and low, he became convinced that his father must have found and appropriated that. The Monsieur Sylvestre to whom it was addressed had undoubtedly deciphered it and interpreted its peculiar wording. "Good-evening!" Some sort of signal had been conveyed to him in that artless salutation. By whom? What manner of man was it who shared the secrets of a hunted criminal, who telegraphed him an enigma, signing it only "John?" John? John Barclay, not improbably, like the "royal good fellow" he had proved himself all along. Barclay, yes. But

now, the more Tom thought of that man in connection with this matter, the less he liked to think of him. His father's plausible explanations ceased to be conclusive. He had been too ready to believe that story of the gambling-house. He doubted everything, even to Barclay's alleged generosity. Who and what was Barclay? Had not Mr. Buck persisted in saddling the man with another name which he now racked his brains to recall, but unsuccessfully? The name, however, mattered nothing; the concealment of it everything, supposing that fact to be correct. Perhaps it was correct, undoubtedly it was. Why had he dismissed that serious charge so lightly? Thus beset with doubts and fears, and piecing together his meagre scraps of evidence, Tom foreshadowed graver mischief yet to come. His sympathies had been enlisted by means of a false confession. The real truth had been cunningly kept back. What was the real truth? How should he proceed to discover it? And when?

The clock struck eleven, while Tom still struggled there for a possible solution of these baffling problems. How the evening had flown! He could not bear this longer; he must contrive to change the current of his thoughts; he would go out and walk until he had worn them all away. Stay! better still. The reception in the Avenue Marigny, driven from his mind by this new care, would serve his purpose admirably. The hour was late, to be sure, but not too late. Though the world might

have come, it could not yet be gone. And that affair of Una and the Vicomte! He must have a confidential talk with Mam'zelle—above all, he must see De Marsan. That was the thing to do. The lights and the flowers and these duties, real or fancied, should divert his mind from his own troubles, which, at the worst, were more than half imaginary. Perhaps, with a vast deal of exertion, he had been making a mountain of a mole-hill, after all.

By the time he reached the Avenue Marigny, the tide had turned, and the carriages were slowly advancing in line to take up the departing guests. In the house, which was still very crowded, the formalities of receiving had come to an end; the host and hostess were nowhere in sight, and Tom, after an unprofitable search for them, was suddenly confronted by Mrs. Norman Mallow, who called him to account.

"Enfin!" she said, with a playful smile. "It is quite time, I think, for monsieur to greet his hostess."

"Precisely; but I have just arrived, and am unable to find her. Pray tell me where she is."

"Give yourself no more uneasiness. You have found her already, mon ami. Una is ill upstairs, and I have been receiving in her place, with Mademoiselle de Champfleury. Don't look so disappointed, but present yourself to Mam'zelle and tell her all has gone wonderfully; without extravagance you may."

They were swept apart, and Tom went on to join a merry group of which Mam'zelle, in the highest spirits and wearing the gayest of colors, made the central figure. Her wits flew everywhere at once, and this was no time for concentrating them upon a serious subject. After a light speech or two Tom drew back hopelessly, but she, as if divining his thought, detained him a moment longer.

"You are not going, petit Saint Thomas!" she whispered.

"No. I want a word with you later."

"Good! When the world has left us. Wait until the last." And she turned to her guests again.

In the supper-room he finally encountered Mr. Vandermere, who poured out a glass of wine for him, and as they drank together asked if he had seen anything of the Vicomte de Marsan. Tom replied in the negative.

"That's strange; he promised to be here. I counted upon him."

Then the busy host moved off, while Tom put down his glass and sighed.

"Not here," he muttered. "It can mean but one thing. The Vicomte saw Una this morning in the Galerie de la Madeleine."

He made another tour of the rooms, chatting of indifferent matters with one friend after another, yet always hoping for the friend who had failed him. But now it was folly to hope longer. In the last ten minutes the crowd had dwindled to a

mere handful of people ; in ten minutes more not a soul would be left. And Tom, changing his plan, determined to slip away unnoticed. What right had he to trust a third person with secrets that were not his own ? Some trivial cause might have detained De Marsan ; his confidence, in any case, commanded respect. And Una's ? Since her evil genius had voluntarily withdrawn his influence, no danger warranting interposition seemed now to threaten her. The Baron de Rozières, thank Heaven, must be half way to Lyons by this time.

But in the hall Tom was stopped by his host, who begged him to smoke a cigar, and would hear of no excuse. It was not late, and though Mr. Vandermere's duties of entertainment were ended, his secretary was at work upon some letters to be signed later on ; until then there would be time to kill ; Tom must stay and help him kill it. Thus urged, Tom yielded, and the two sat together in the library, while through the glass doors of an inner room the secretary could be seen bending over his task. The money question was always prominent in Mr. Vandermere's mind, and his real motive for keeping Tom manifested itself in various questions about stocks and rates of interest, lasting the length of one cigar. When this was finished, Tom bade him good-night and withdrew. A glare of light came from the drawing-room, which bore evidences of the crush that had taken place in it. The furniture was all awry and the floor was littered with leaves and flower-petals

trodden underfoot. In the midst of the disorder stood Mademoiselle de Champfleury, alone, before one of the mirrors. She laughed and blushed like a school-girl at this betrayal of vanity, and then told Tom that Mrs. Mallow had but that moment gone.

"And Miss Vandermere?" said Tom. "How unlucky that she should have been taken ill—not seriously, I hope."

"Oh, no; she went to her room before dinner with a headache. Poor child! She was so sorry! One amuses one's self sadly upstairs, with a fête going on."

"And she is no worse?"

"No, or I should have heard. We may assure ourselves in a moment." And hailing a passing servant, she asked him to send Miss Vandermere's maid into the drawing-room.

The man returned in a moment with the statement that the maid had gone out.

"Gone out?" repeated Mademoiselle de Champfleury, in surprise. "Where?"

"I do not know, Mademoiselle. André thinks she was sent to the railway station."

There was an inarticulate cry from Tom, immediately suppressed, but followed by a violent fit of coughing, in which he turned away. And Mam'zelle, watching him with great composure, said to the servant:

"Oh, yes; it explains itself. That is all."

The man left the room, but she darted across it to Tom's side.

"*Enfant!* What is the matter with you?" she asked, in a hoarse whisper.

Tom faced her, pale and cold.

"I saw them at the Gare de Lyons," he gasped.
"I saw them both."

"Who—both?" she demanded, now the paler of the two.

"Don't ask me. Go to Miss Vandermere's room. Quick! See if she is there."

She was gone, while he spoke, and back again before he had paced the room's length twice, her face telling him only what he knew already.

"Oh, Tom!" she murmured in a voice choked with tears. "The room was dark and empty. I found no one—nothing—nothing but this." And handing him a sealed letter, she sank into a chair sobbing as though her heart would break.

The letter was addressed to Mr. Vandermere in Una's hand; Tom stared at it silently and laid it down.

"Speak!" continued Mam'zelle, querulously, with streaming eyes. "Say something! She was not alone. Tell me what you know."

"The Baron—the Baron de Rozières," stammered Tom, incoherently.

"And you said nothing, did nothing—did not even try to stop them?"

"She was veiled; I did not recognize her. I knew I had seen the maid's face before, but could not remember where. Even if I had comprehended all at the moment, it would have done no good.

They were in the carriage; the train was already moving."

Mam'zelle's answer was another helpless flood of tears. And Tom, as he paced the room once more, striving for means to comfort her, could not find them; he could only close the door gently upon her grief that the servants might not see.

"What is to be done?" he inquired, at last.

"I don't know. It is all my fault—my fault—my fault," she repeated, wildly.

"It is no more yours than mine," he replied. "She did this thing herself, and it is a thing of the past now, fixed, irrevocable, as if it had happened years ago instead of hours. We have the present to consider; think of that, think how I can help you to deal with it." He stood still, waiting for her to speak, and wondering a little at his own calmness. The events of this sad night already affected his impressionable nature like the years he talked about. Young as he was, sorrow had visited and revisited him, and now again laid her hand upon him gravely.

The woman wondered, too, as she looked at him with tearful eyes, and strove to imitate his self-command.

"There is nothing to be done," she said, mournfully—"except to let her father know."

"Shall I give him this?" asked Tom, turning to the letter.

"No, no!" she cried, quickly, catching his arm. "He must be alone when he reads that. Leave

him to himself; go, go quietly without a word. To speak with him of her would be mistaken kindness; he would not thank you for it. Go!"

"You are right," said he; "I should only be in the way. If I can help you later, you will send for me. Good-night!"

She put her hand in his with a grateful look; but he doubted if she were conscious either of his speech or of the acknowledgment she had made. For her eyes returned immediately to the letter, and were still fixed upon it when he left the room.

In passing out, he turned involuntarily toward the library window. It stood open, and he could see Mr. Vandermere walking up and down within. The minister was in high spirits; he stopped, his face lighting up at some merry word from the secretary, whose work, no doubt, was over; then he resumed his walk, timing it to a snatch of his favorite song.

"Le roi Dagobert

A mis ses culottes à l'envers . . ."

was borne out upon the night through which Tom, shivering, went his way.

CHAPTER VI.

"POOR TOM'S A-COLD"

THE storm which had been in prospect all that day and night burst before the dawn, ushering in a wild, wet morning. The rain whirled in sheets against Tom's window-panes. But he had gone to bed worn out, and in spite of the disturbing elements he slept profoundly to a late hour. Upon reaching the office, he found the business of the day begun; the letters were all opened, and to one, held between them, both partners made anxious references. As he came in, they nodded to him abstractedly, but immediately resumed their reading; and a glance at their grave, haggard faces told him that, whatever change had occurred in the trying situation of the day before, could not be for the better.

"Is there bad news?" he faltered.

"Bad—very," said Gresham, quietly.

"What is it? May I know?"

The brothers exchanged looks, as if each wished the other to undertake a disagreeable duty. Then Gresham handed over the letter from Marmaduke, merely saying:

"I had a telegram last night. Here is the whole story."

The first words that met Tom’s eyes were like a flash of lightning, blinding him to all the rest. He turned from them in mute appeal to the two men ; but neither spoke, and he read in their leaden features only confirmation of the incredible truth. They watched him in the same dispirited silence as, dropping into a chair, he spread the letter out before him and tried to consider its statements calmly.

These statements set forth the fact that the acceptances negotiated with Mallow & Company by John Barclay, in Paris and London, were skillful forgeries ; the accidental omission of a date in one of them had brought the crime to light prematurely, since the document, sent for rectification to the firm whose name it bore, was by the supposed acceptors at once declared to be fraudulent. This had led to investigation of the others, which was still going on with the worst results ; the probability being that the greater part of the securities thus placed to Barclay’s credit were valueless. Marmaduke wrote at the latest possible moment, yet only a few hours after the shock of this discovery. It was, therefore, too soon to report the actual state of things. But bad as the case seemed with these losses treading on the heels of the Turkish disaster, he believed that if the firm could hold on for the next day or two, all might yet go well. As for the scoundrel, Barclay, he was not to be found at his hotel ; undoubtedly, he had not worked out his infernal scheme alone ; even should he escape,

some of the gang might still be taken ; possibly, too, some, if not all, of the money advanced might be recovered. The police were on the alert ; they had sent full telegraphic advices to Paris for the arrest of anyone who should turn up at Barclay's office there. So, commending his associates to a forlorn hope that could not commend itself to a less sanguine mind than his, Marmaduke closed this lamentable record of the day's developments.

Tom's heart sank, as only too plainly he read between the lines one hideous fact of which the writer had not dreamed. His own father stood revealed to him as Barclay's chief accomplice, in all likelihood the perpetrator of the forgeries. Many puzzling details of the attempted flight at which he had connived were explained in an instant. He understood now that warning message and its disappearance, his father's terror and excessive precaution, his trumped up confession, his subsequent hint of some dark truth behind, involving harm to his son, for which he prayed forgiveness. In search of that truth Tom had groped ineffectually, wondering what it could be, and if he was ever to discover it ; not twelve hours had elapsed, and it was clear to him as noonday. But in the very moment of the revelation he determined, for the present at least, to keep this unpleasant knowledge to himself. Nothing in the tale, were he to tell it, could throw the faintest light upon his father's hiding-

place. If the police were already on the right track, as might well be imagined, the man’s arrest was likely to occur at any moment ; when that occurred, everything must be told ; until then nothing, nothing.

While this word rang in his ears like a refrain, he handed back the letter, and said of it he knew not what. With the others his agitation, if observed at all, passed as a matter of course : their minds were full. Gresham would go this way, Norman that, making desperate appeals to personal friends in hope of relieving London. As they compared notes about this, in whispers, there came a telegram.

“ Cipher ! ” said Gresham, after tearing it open with a very uncertain hand. “ Where is the code ? ”

Tom brought the book to interpret Marmaduke’s enigmatic words as they were repeated to him—words never before used in the history of the house, indicating extreme peril and imploring help. “ He has lost his head,” muttered Gresham, and swore fierce oaths under his breath ; Norman did not speak ; Tom, meanwhile, looked down the printed page with a curious eagerness to see what fearful words would follow if the worst came to the worst. VINDEK—we have suspended payment : he read, and closed the book. It was as if he had seen the word written, not printed. That would come next ; it might even then be on its way.

So the partners hurried out into the rain, leaving Tom in charge. Hours passed ; slow, unevent-

ful hours, made doubly gloomy by the storm outside. There were no important transactions; from a business point of view the day was very light, and they had retained ample means to meet its obligations. The routine went on as usual, Tom accomplishing his share of it with outward calmness; but inwardly he was on fire. Norman looked in once, shook his head mournfully, and went away again. Gresham did not return; London sent neither report nor appeal; and the only interruption to this course of ominous tranquillity came late in the morning, from the hand of Mademoiselle de Champfleury, who wrote two lines to say that Mr. Vandermere had borne his misfortune with characteristic impassiveness; over his daughter's letter he had paced the room all night, she knew; but without a word of complaint or reproach, pale and silent, yet still entirely himself, he had taken the morning train to Marseilles. Tom, destroying this, sighed to think that Una's flight was already a remote event of secondary importance. He had, in fact, forgotten it; for confusion and trouble enough to fill one mind he did not need to go so far afield.

The early hours of the afternoon brought in a round of duties that left him little time for introspection. There were letters to sign, questions innumerable to answer, since he was still alone. And the end of this dark day drew very near; looking at the clock, he noted with joy that in twenty minutes more would come the hour of closing.

Almost at the same moment, while he chatted with Strong, the cashier, over some trifling matter which had diverted them both, the door opened and a messenger put a telegram into Tom’s hand. He read it; tossed it away carelessly; and Strong went back to his desk without a suspicion that it contained but one word—the word of dreadful import which Tom, all day, had feared to see: VINDEX. The London house had suspended payment.

What to do? Ought he not to close the doors at once? Had he the right to conceal their disgrace for even fifteen minutes longer? He looked into the outer office. Two men were drawing money at the counter there—money left for safe-keeping in the hands of Mallow & Co. Tom felt that he should tell them to leave no sou behind; but at least, neither they nor any one should deposit money; he would mount guard over the counter and decline to receive it. The men passed out, and left him at his post; but this was the last transaction of the day, and his contemplated interference came to nothing. When the clock struck, Strong quietly shut his grated wicket, Giraud went out and locked the doors. As the bolts shot into place, Tom thought he had never heard a sound so dismal; turning back to his own desk, he picked up the telegram, studied the printed matter upon it helplessly, and listened to the rain.

In a little while the partners returned together, empty-handed, Gresham declaring that the one soul sure to have helped him was absent from Paris;

others, in whom he had confided, offered their abundant sympathy, but nothing else. Obviously, both he and Norman had discounted the bad news with which Tom received them. There would be an end to struggling, and that in its way was a relief. They sent at once for their lawyer, Monsieur Lerolle, who came back with the messenger. He was a keen, active little man, unemotional, precise. In five minutes he had taken charge of everything. There was no Mallow & Co. any more, but only Monsieur Lerolle. Under his matter-of-fact guidance, Tom entered immediately upon the performance of various painful duties; he communicated the evil tidings to the clerks, saw that they were paid in full, and instructed them to be in their places on Monday morning as if nothing had happened; he wrote a notice to be placed upon the door-post for all the world to read; he proved Strong's balance, and prepared a preliminary statement for the creditors. "Take your time, Monsieur Sylvestre," said Tom's new master, as he hurried away after a final conference with the Mallows, who sat apart behind closed doors; "happily, there is a Sunday before us. But if you have personal property here, remove it. When the Syndic comes he will put his seal on everything."

Here was, indeed, an end to struggling. Tom looked sadly at the inner room from which no sound came. In a terrible stillness, as if someone were lying dead within, his melancholy work went on. Mrs. Mallow, to whom word had been sent, arrived

in due time, tremulous and pale. She passed in for a word with her husband, and presently reappeared, paler still.

“Tom,” she said, “I want your help. Norman can do nothing. My jewels—they must be put in some safe place. Everything, here and at home, they say, is to be sealed.”

“Where are they?” Tom inquired.

“I have brought them with me, packed in their case—not a large one. It is outside in the carriage.”

Tom thought a moment. “There is Rouleau, the jeweller, close by,” said he. “We might leave them with him.”

Mrs. Mallow assenting, to Rouleau accordingly they went, and to him Tom explained their errand. The man’s face lengthened perceptibly; Tom did not need to be told why, as he recollected, a moment too late, that Rouleau had money in the firm’s hands. But this creditor was a very kindly soul, and, perceiving Tom’s apprehension, hastened to do away with it. “I am very sorry,” he declared, “more for these good people than for myself. The money they owe me is a trifle. Madame may trust me. I will keep the jewels, and deliver them only into her hands.”

These friendly words touched Tom to the heart; the spirit of French courtesy shone through them; and ever after he remembered that little incident as the one gleam of sunshine in a long, dark day. Night settled down at last, and he walked home

through the grimy streets tired and disconsolate. That morning he had been the *chef de bureau* of a prosperous banking-house, with high hopes of the future, a possible partnership in store for him. To-night his only comfort seemed to be that he was not a partner. The house never could go on, that he felt intuitively; these men were ruined and disgraced; their state was infinitely worse than his, yet they were destined to survive the harm of it, to live on to a good old age. But to Tom their failure, comparatively unimportant, barely to be chronicled among passing events, was like the dissolution of a world. The very ground beneath his feet felt unstable as water. That old despondency of his childhood, conquering him completely, made the outlook blacker than it really was. He saw himself already without employment, an outcast in the midst of strangers. And for the immediate cause of the failure he took himself to task unjustly. Since through him the man, Barclay, had first obtained a hold upon the house, Tom assumed that but for him such a hold would never have existed; that solely by his eagerness to accept the lying scoundrel's statements, Mallow & Co. had been delivered over to a gang of thieves. A gang of which the head and front was his own father, flying from justice, but almost sure to be hunted down and taken! When would this last blow fall? How long before that other Tom Sylvester, *alias* Stewart Barclay, *alias* Heaven knew what else, would stand in the dock, a felon?

The outlook, in truth, needed no morbid exaggeration to make it a cheerless one. No wonder that Tom alternately grew hot and cold as he turned from the wet pavement into the hall of his lodging-house. There, on the shelf, lay a letter bearing the city postmark, and addressed to him in a hand, long forgotten, but recognizable on the instant as his father's own. He dashed upstairs to his room, locked the door, and bolted it. Then in fear and trembling he tore the letter open; and like one who gropes in the dark, reading and re-reading for a sense which he knew was there, but which seemed to elude his grasp, he finally made out these words :

"MY DEAR BOY :

"That damned Barclay has got away with all the cash, and has left me out in the cold. I telegraphed to Genoa for funds, and there was nothing. I have nothing. He planned that from the first, like the skunk he is. He has all, and may he be damned for it. One of our party was detained last night. You must have seen him. That was why I was not there. If you don't know what this means, you will know later. I could not help what I did. If I had explained, you would have thrown me over. I meant well, I swear to God I did, but now the game's all up. Don't think any disgrace will come to you. I'm a gentleman, and know too much for that. They want me, but they'll have to want, I guess. I shall never be taken, count on

it. I may be a poor lot, but I'm too much of a gentleman to get found out or bring you to any harm. No one this side the water knows my name, and so I sign it.

“Your affectionate father,

“TOM SYLVESTER.”

There was a stain upon the letter, where a drop of some liquid, falling, had discolored it. But Tom needed no such evidence to show him that the writer had been drinking. Maudlin, vague, and incoherent as these statements were, they threw a strong gleam of light upon the whole dark business. Leroux, whom he had never liked, was implicated, and that arrest had warned his father in the nick of time. By what accident Barclay, in London, had also been warned to fly, Tom could not conjecture. Perhaps the apparent connection between his flight and the discovery of the forgeries was a mere coincidence. Perhaps, prepared for the last act of his deep-laid scheme, with the lion's share of the plunder in his possession, he had despatched his parting word derisively, not as a danger-signal. However that might be, this precious rascal, who had made dishonor among thieves the crowning touch to his knavery, must in all likelihood have protected himself by a long start. So clever a rogue as he would slip through Vidocq's own fingers. But in his father's confident hope to do likewise Tom did not share; nor did it occur to him to doubt the truth of the poor

cat's-paw's assertion, that he had been left "out in the cold," as the letter expressed it. "Helpless, without money, here in Paris they will take him within twenty-four hours," thought he; and in that moment, with only a few hundred francs in his pocket, would have constituted himself an accessory after the fact and risked his own future to save the criminal from this present peril. But low as the man had fallen, with all his sentimental maundering about gentlemanly instincts, he had shown consideration enough to save his son from that temptation. The letter gave no hint of his whereabouts; it was impossible to communicate with him. The paper slipped from Tom's hand to the floor. He bowed his head upon the table, and remained there in the dim candle-light a long while, unconscious of time's flight, of all that went on around him. Footsteps passed up and down the stairs; carriages rattled by in the street, but even when one stopped just under his window he did not know it. A moment later, however, he was roused by a heavy knock at his door. "Come in!" he called, forgetting lock and bolt. The handle was turned and the knock repeated. Then, with a dread he could not have defined, he went to the door and threw it open, to discover upon the threshold Mr. Buck, who rushed in like a whirlwind, but stopped aghast at sight of Tom's drawn face.

"Tom!" he cried. "Don't take this so hard! I've just come from London, and things are bad

enough, but not so bad as that; and it's no fault of yours. 'Let us not repine,' D. Webster says."

Tom tried to speak, waited irresolutely for a moment, then flung himself into a chair, and hid his face without a word.

"Thomas, my boy, what is it?" demanded Mr. Buck, now thoroughly alarmed. "What's the trouble with you? Tell me what it is."

Then, little by little, Tom told him the whole story of the Barclay account and his father's connection with it, recounting his adventures and suspicions which he confirmed by the chief document in the case, the letter there at hand. And, while his old friend studied this with ever-increasing wonder, Tom wandered from the point a little, characteristically charging himself with short-sightedness and lack of judgment, declaring that if the house failed to go on the blame would be wholly his.

"You?" said Mr. Buck, hotly. "Just quit such talk as that. You ain't done nothin' to be ashamed of. The house has been speculatin' like mad; it was bound to go any way."

"Do you think so?"

"I know it. You can't judge, you're inside. I'm out; I hear the talk, and that's what they all say."

Tom sighed, and after a pause, reverted to the letter which Mr. Buck was still reading.

"But about this? my father?"

"Well, damn *him*!" said Mr. Buck, tossing the document aside in great contempt. "A fine gen-

tleman, *he* is ! Hold your hush, and let things take their course. Don’t do nothin’. He’ll get away if he’s lively, and, for your sake, I hope to Judas he will. And now, Thomas, put on your bonnet and shawl, and come with me to dinner. Hungry ain’t a circumstance ! We’ll talk the whole thing over quietly, while the frogs’ legs are a-stewin’ ! ”

The dinner and the talk had the excellent result of putting Tom into a reasonable and comparatively comfortable frame of mind ; he went to bed feeling that a small fragment, at least, of the European continent would withstand the threatened chaos. Mr. Buck, at his own request, camped out for the night upon a sofa in the next room. Nothing within the bounds of possibility could have helped Tom more than the timely irradiation of this rough New England jewel.

The jewel clouded itself indignantly, the next morning, when Tom prepared to report himself for work to Monsieur Lerolle. The Sabbath seemed to Mr. Buck inviolable at all times. “ And you ain’t fit to work, neither,” protested he ; “ you’d much better come to church with me. By the way, where do you worship ? ” Upon Tom’s highly indefinite reply to this question, he looked still more severe. “ But you shan’t work all day, now, mind that ! ” he declared. “ The Lord has seen fit to make his day a fine one after the storm, and you’ll have to get some of his fresh air, if not his gospel. I shall come for you this P.M. as sure as you don’t turn up.”

Accordingly, about the middle of the afternoon, Mr. Buck rattled at the closed doors of the Rue Tronchet and carried Tom away triumphantly; in point of fact, however, no opposition was made to this, Tom having remained upon the ground chiefly from a sense of duty. A creditors' meeting must await a formal call, and the intervening time would amply suffice for proving accounts and computing resources. As he passed out, Mr. Buck looked at the official notice of temporary suspension already posted up, and shook his head. "I know too much for that," said he; "the house will never go on, I'll bet you what you dare on that!" And Tom, who had read the London letters, secretly agreed, though with due discretion he said nothing.

But where Mr. Buck was, silence could not long endure, and they were soon deep in an animated discussion about Parisian Sabbath-breaking, as the stern New Englander called it; while Tom contended that it was not breaking at all. With no objective point in view they walked straight on from the end of the Rue Royale, and crossed the Pont de la Concorde still talking earnestly, hardly perceiving where they were; then, at Tom's suggestion, agreeing to disagree, they turned to the left along the quay toward Notre Dame and the Cité, and occupied themselves only with the incomparable scene before them. The air was very clear after the storm—for May, unusually clear; and the historic cathedral towers rose against the sky with

all their detail sharpened by the brilliant afternoon light, which glistened in other towers and spires of less importance, some of them tipped with gold. Opposite, the trees of the Tuileries garden tossed their freshened tops, the Louvre stretched in gray length along the river that swept below them between its high parapets, through the arches of its splendid bridges. The crowded *bateaux-mouches* were plying from landing to landing, omnibuses rattled this way and that, from the huge bath-house moored in the Seine came the shouts of unseen bathers. At the book-stalls on the embankment-wall, the dealers chattered with possible buyers, who cleverly and often successfully feigned indifference to the worn bindings and yellow title-pages. All was animation and cheerfulness in keeping with the sunshine, under which Mr. Buck expanded even to the point of forgetting what day of the week it was. Just beyond the Pont-Neuf, on the Quai des Grands Augustins, he crossed abruptly to the window of a print-shop, Tom following in suppressed amusement at this keen interest newly awakened, yet already disinclined to lose anything that might be considered a part of the show.

The window was full of Méryon’s etchings of Paris, and among them was that of the Morgue with its ghastly, versified legend of the artist’s own brain and hand :

“ En mère charitable,
La ville de Paris

Donne en tout temps gratis
Et le lit et la table. . . .

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Ici la mort convie
Tous ceux qui par Destin
Couchent sur le chemin,
Amour, misère, envie."

This seemed more than all the rest to touch Mr. Buck's austere fancy ; with Tom's help he studied it line by line, word by word ; and his mind still dwelt upon it as they followed the brink of the canal to the Place Saint-Michel, where they hesitated for a moment, three courses being open to them. On one side, beyond the huge bronze fountain, a wide boulevard stretched away through the Quartier Latin ; on the other gleamed the beautiful Sainte-Chapelle, its tall windows and carved gables towering high above the intervening roofs. "Which way ?" Tom asked ; then Mr. Buck, pointing toward Notre Dame, now very near, suggested the third course—that of keeping straight on and going round the island ; this they took, crossing by the Pont de l'Archevêché, and there delaying for some time, midway, to admire the view of the cathedral from this fine standpoint. When, at last, they reached the open ground behind the church, the true reason for Mr. Buck's choice of this way rather than the others suddenly betrayed itself. Close at hand stood the building

of which he had so lately been reminded, for which, like many of his countrymen, he cherished a morbid fondness—the Morgue. Whether it was with the dreadful hope of witnessing a recognition there, or with no more than the traditional horror of the place to allure him, certain it is that the Anglo-Saxon of those days rarely passed its gloomy walls without being drawn within them, even when they were not made the special object of his wandering. Just now, it happened that a crowd had gathered before the closed doors, which were reopened as Tom and Mr. Buck came up. The latter’s proposal to go in, therefore, followed naturally enough, and Tom never suspected that it was the result of artful premeditation induced by the etching in the shop window. He, himself, having peered more than once through the glass screen that defended the dead from all but the over-curious eyes of the living, felt no desire to do so again; nevertheless, he yielded without resistance. “It will only be for a moment,” he thought.

Chance thus serving as an instrument of his design, Mr. Buck led Tom from the cheerful hum of the city into that awe-struck silence which death enforces upon high and low alike. There was but one sight to see, just recovered from the river, and as he pressed toward it through the knot of spectators, a strange sound at his side startled and checked him.

He turned, to be seized with a sudden fear, new, indefinable.

“Good Lord of love, boy,” he whispered, “what has struck you?”

Tom drew back, groping for the wall and leaning against it, whiter than the death they looked upon.

“My father!” he gasped.

“What! THAT!”

Part V.

PORT AFTER STORMIE SEAS

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CHAPTER I.

A TURNING-POINT

SUMMER night on the Boulevard! In every glowing café the *dame de comptoir* keeps her state alone, while her patrons throng the pavement, where the waiters make their way with difficulty between crowded tables, set three rows deep; and if one can find a place among them, a full hour's pleasure may be gained simply by studying one's neighbors there over a foaming *bock* or a frozen *granit d'orange*, with all the varied masque of humanity sauntering back and forth, ten steps away. On a fine night in summer this unexampled show is at its best. The green leaves overhead soften the glare of the lights, fluttering and rustling in cheerful accompaniment to all that goes on below. They know not winter, and we, sitting in their playful shadows, have forgotten it. Care and want and sorrow shrink so far out of sight that they half persuade us to disbelieve in their existence. If ever Arcadia strays into town, her place and season for that mistaken frolic must surely be the Boulevard des Italiens in the month of June.

On this particular evening Tom had dined alone at a quiet restaurant of the second rank, away from

the thoroughfare, into which he had turned by the natural impulse of a Parisian the moment his solitary meal was over. Lighting his cigar, he had wandered on and on like the idlest *flâneur* of them all, so far as looks went, but in reality busy with thoughts that were in no way influenced by the multitudinous sights and sounds through which he moved. Instead of receiving new sensations from the life around him, he was living over again his sensations of the last few weeks, so crammed with painful incidents that for a time it had seemed as if life must cease then and there. As from a ship's deck one sees the small clouds gradually rise to darken all the sky, scenting the storm and dreading it, yet impotent to stay its course or to escape its fury, so he, Tom Sylvester, insignificant unit that he was, had watched and waited, alone, helpless in the storm's very heart, until no gleam of light was left before him. But the longest night passes, the sharpest trial wears itself away; and these same clouds were already left behind, to be viewed with ever-increasing calmness like all passages of the irrevocable past, once put out of range. Though the forward prospect was not especially bright, at least it was not appalling. The things that had been could not be again; and Tom found a grim comfort in looking back at them defiantly and making this reflection—something better than comfort too, undoubtedly. For if, as the sage declares, experience is a lantern at the stern, shining only on the waves behind us,

its light has the peculiar virtue of strengthening the eyesight, and thereby causing us to be a little less afraid of the dark than are the children, who have no such glimmer at their backs to guide them.

To-night the stirring scenes in which of late he had figured as principal or as subordinate, passed rapidly before him one by one; each had worked itself out to a definite conclusion, and in the after-glow now cast upon it his small drama of many episodes appeared to be well on in its final act, where little more remained to happen. There was Una Vandermere, in the first place, with her *ennui*, her recklessness, her obstinate infatuation, and lastly her miserable choice. That, at least, might have been prevented, as sometimes he could not help believing, by a wise word of his spoken at the right moment; but in that decisive one when, as he now surmised, she had come to him for help, instead of speaking the word he had hardly looked at her, blindly letting her tragedy go on. Was it a tragedy, after all? The scandal of her flight had proved a mere nine days' wonder, whispered abroad only to be forgotten. And she was now the Baronne de Rozières, reconciled with her father, who, taking up this mangled matter at the best, had accepted the inevitable; her triumph was thus complete; she would be courted and envied too, unquestionably, by those who at first had been the readiest to speak ill of her. Even Made-moiselle de Champfleury, descending upon Tom

in the Rue Tronchet to announce the news, had worn a radiant look, as if this union of two loving hearts were the long-desired issue, reached at last by the most conventional means imaginable. But Tom, contemplating her in silent wonder, recalled vividly that other Mademoiselle de Champfleury whom he had left alone in the abandoned ball-room, crushed by a grief which she had found no words to express. That had been the real woman; this one was too voluble by half. He could fancy how well the bride's father would play his cheerful part in their little comedy of manners; but he had no heart to see it, and thus far a meeting with Mr. Vandermere had been avoided. As for Una herself, he did not even know where she was. He imagined that she would hardly care to renew her friendship with him now; a great gulf seemed suddenly to have opened between them, parting them forever; beyond it, her receding figure already grew vague and indistinct, as if he were looking back upon her through a long vista of years.

Almost equally remote had become the encounter with his unhappy father and all that followed it, down to the discovery of the man's death, which Tom felt beyond a doubt to have been self-inflicted. The river had been the hunted criminal's chosen refuge, and in the very moment of recognition at the Morgue, there had flashed through Tom's mind the words of his father's letter clearly pointing to such an end. Aided by Mr. Buck he had identified and claimed the body as that of a

wandering American in desperate circumstances. The deposition, entirely true so far as it went, had been found sufficient, and Tom Sylvester the elder now lay in a quiet corner of Montmartre beyond the reach of human judgment. That the secret of his complicity with Barclay in the forgeries would never come to the world's knowledge Tom hoped and believed. The evidence at the trial of Leroux, now progressing in London, had referred more than once to the missing man Stewart, *alias* Stewart Barclay, who, in company with the master-thief, was believed to have escaped scot-free to parts unknown. Nothing indicated that the police knew him by any name but these; even Barclay himself, in all likelihood, had no evidence of the close relationship between the *chef de bureau*, his dupe, and the associate whom he had outwitted. This grain of truth need never be made public now. How could it help the world to know that the forger, condemned by default, had been brought before a higher court as Tom Sylvester? His worldly career had ended—all the harm he could do on earth was done; let him lie in the earth over there at Montmartre, and his name perish with him, until such time as its present holder could redeem it from obscurity. That was Tom Sylvester's only inheritance from his father, as his Uncle Mark had warned him long ago—the need of making the name he bore an honored one.

But the possible fulfilment of that hope lay at the end of a long lane with no turning anywhere

in sight. Just at present Tom Sylvester walked alone through a throng of strangers, the most obscure of all the souls among them. Without coveting any high distinction, as he fancied, he had been able until very lately to regard himself complacently, conscious of an authority that many older men might have envied. If the future he had mapped out was not precisely the ideal one he would have chosen, nevertheless it promised him a fair prospect of success according to the world's standard. The promise had been suddenly broken by a catastrophe for which this same world, if it looked at all, must look upon him as in some degree to blame. That very authority, which he had earned so laboriously, served to make him at the critical moment unpleasantly conspicuous. He it was who had been forced to the front on the dismal Monday morning when a horde of angry creditors took the house of Mallow & Co. by storm, reading with dismay the notice of its temporary suspension and hastening in to vent their feelings unreservedly. By the advice of Monsieur Lerolle the partners held themselves aloof, making Tom their representative. The experience had been far from pleasant. That day, in fact, stood out above all others as the hardest one of his life. Men had sworn and threatened; women, claiming their own which he could not give, had overwhelmed him with sarcastic abuse ending in a burst of tears, or had looked at him inquiringly with a mute despair that he knew not how to answer. Most trying of

all had been the attitude of certain friends, from whom he hoped for consideration. Mr. Lisle, for instance, though having, as it happened, but a few hundred francs in the firm's hands, had received his statements with a look of cold contempt, and had gone away without a word. Later in the day, Tom was able to contrast this conduct with that of a mere acquaintance, De Marsan, who, losing a large sum, never turned a hair at the thought of it, but instead gave Monsieur Sylvestre the assurance of a belief that he was not to blame, and bade him be of good cheer so warmly that Tom's eyes grew very dim at this unexpected kindness. Another grain of comfort came in a note from Hannah Lisle. By a few sympathetic words she made some amends for her father's discourtesy. Tom sent her at once a grateful reply, and there his relations with the family had ended. In spite of this friendly message, the vague distrust which Tom had conceived of Miss Lisle at their last meeting would not be conquered. A day or two afterward he heard a rumor that she was soon to return to America. Tom mentioned this to Gresham Mallow, and wondered what he thought of it, remembering that her messenger had brought a note for Gresham too. But Mr. Mallow found no opinion worth communicating upon this important subject, which he changed with marked abruptness: clearly, his own cordial relations with the most agreeable member of the Lisle household were likewise at an end.

To the first day's trial had succeeded other in-

glorious days and weeks, during which Tom was subjected to continual mortification hard to bear. In youth, fatigue, bodily or mental, may be endured and even laughed at, prolonging itself indefinitely, if only some definite hope attends it to bring each night the reactionary glow of exhilaration. But this was hopeless labor, performed less from choice than from the force of circumstances. For the Syndic, when appointed, felt the need of a trustworthy assistant, familiar with the ground, to watch over the seals and otherwise to represent him in his absence. Tom was accordingly pressed into this service, which, though ungrateful, had its compensations; particularly that of making him independent of his brother Grip, who had transferred to him a large sum of money, by cable, on the day of the failure. The timely message had been followed up by a letter of rejoicing in which Grip clearly stated his belief that the downfall of Mallow & Co. was a blessing in disguise, since it must bring Tom immediately back to his native land. This conclusion, reached at once by the elder brother as a matter of course, had the curious effect of irritating the younger one to an extraordinary degree. Tom had long pictured to himself a homeward progress of a very different kind, in which he was to figure as a man of success, a rich cosmopolite, triumphant and enviable. A citizen of the world, like Monsieur Sylvestre, could not be cramped by Worthingham and its narrow ways. He might consent to revisit

the place from time to time, as his cousin Marmaduke had done before him, to consider it for an hour or two with a patronizing smile and come away again. To establish himself there under any circumstances, however favorable, would be disheartening; he had outgrown the restraints of such a life. Returning to it now, even for a time, in accordance with Grip's hasty assumption, he must inevitably be regarded as a miserable failure, an object of compassion, a sort of prodigal son, to be served once or twice with the fatted calf, and then left to take up the old burden and plod along in the rut as best he might. How could Grip even suggest a course so humiliating? Tom, reading the letter in a feverish mood, felt that rather than go back to Worthingham upon such terms, he would drop to the lowest round of the ladder in Paris, and put on a blouse if need be. He dashed off an indignant reply, which would have wounded Grip's feelings inexpressibly, but that Tom had the good sense to destroy it an hour afterward, substituting one more cautiously worded, much calmer in its tone. He said simply that he was more than grateful to Grip for his kindness, but that he had made no plans for returning home and could make none just at present, since he desired to remain abroad if possible. Of the distressing events and experiences connected with the failure, of his meeting and parting with his father, he said nothing. To excite the family upon that last subject until he could fur-

nish all the details would be useless, he argued not unjustly. So bidding them be entirely at ease upon his account, he closed the letter with an assumption of cheerfulness, and put away Grip's money, privately resolving not to use one sou of it until absolute want of daily bread should threaten him.

In writing thus, Tom was not without a lingering hope that the credit of Mallow & Co. might be retrieved by some miracle—for nothing less would accomplish this, as he knew perfectly well in his wiser moments. But the first creditors' meeting left of this visionary longing not even its shadow. The statements submitted by the firm betrayed a long-continued recklessness in its dealings that was positively culpable. Gresham's perverse financial theory, that supply must of necessity follow demand, had apparently been adopted as an article of faith, and a superstitious trust in him had clouded the clearer sense of his associates. The victims of this submission to a rash dictatorship rose in wrath, and the meeting ended stormily, with threats of criminal procedure. These harsh measures were checked only by the diplomacy of Monsieur Lerolle, who exerted himself nobly in behalf of his unhappy clients. There had been no intentional wrong-doing, he argued; the errors were errors of judgment; less would be gained by pushing the embarrassed firm to the wall, than by making the best of a bad business and accepting such settlement as it could offer.

This reasoning, supplemented by time's soothing influence, seemed likely to prevail; the second meeting had adjourned calmly enough; at the third one, the much-desired settlement would undoubtedly be reached. But it was a bad failure. The house of Mallow & Co. had fallen, never to rise again. Mr. Buck's foreboding at the instant of temporary suspension had come true, and Tom must look elsewhere for the means of livelihood.

Where to look — that was the one question in which all these after-dinner thoughts merged themselves little by little as Tom walked on. He saw clearly that his prominence with the Mallows would be, for a time at least, a clog about his heels. Gradually he must shake it off, and win his spurs again in some junior clerkship, losing years of youth, perhaps, in the process. Horrible! There was simple truth, then, in the old idea of destiny, inexorably fixed, not to be overcome, though one might strive with all the strength of Samson. His early life had been a nightmare of sums that would not come right, and here he was on the point of being involved in it again. Even Grip, generous as he was, with all his solicitude for his brother's welfare, evidently feared that brother to be fit for nothing else. And Mr. Buck, three days before, had sailed away to America with the same thought in his mind. Indeed, the good, commonplace Yankee had gone a little farther, and had actually undertaken to restore Tom

to his former desk, hedged in with hardware, at Bolton's. He had begged, urged—nay, insisted that Tom should go back with him. Monsieur Sylvestre had stoutly refused, and the two had almost quarrelled in consequence. And now the old hack, turning his face toward home, would soon resume the harness gladly, gratefully even; while the green colt snuffed the night air, free, it is true, but alone—very much alone.

Pondering all this in his heart, Tom walked farther than he intended, and suddenly found himself on the Boulevard St. Martin, where the sidewalk, quaintly terraced above the street, protects a bit of older Paris from the march of modern improvement. The region has a comfortable, provincial look, and its relation to the thoroughfare revived in Tom's mind one of his earliest impressions—the row of white New England houses on Gentility Hill in Worthingham. A natural sequence of ideas led his thought straight to that summer afternoon in the Rodneys' garden, when the old print had stirred him with what seemed a hopeless longing to see Paris, when the question of his father's burial place had brought about the confidential talk with his uncle afterward. He remembered the whole scene perfectly, difficult as it was to recognize himself in that small boy assuming that happiness could be grasped and held by its fortunate possessor like a nugget of gold. His particular nugget had fallen to him, but it had been so craftily alloyed that he smiled now to think how

earnestly he would have prayed for the denial of his dearest wish, with even a faint conception of its attendant penalties. Not to wish at all was best ; not to aspire, but to walk like that *chiffonnier* there, in the dim side-street, never looking beyond the small circle of his lantern's light, taking all that came and making the best of everything.

Tom stopped at the street corner to watch the man grope forward, tossing bits of paper over his shoulder with a quick movement of the hook that never missed its mark. "True happiness!" he sighed ; "his one aim is to fill that basket—his one wild hope to find a bank-note there. No ideals trouble him. I envy him his grovelling ignorance. To dream, and then to know a little, are the two curses of humanity." Thus philosophizing as the man came up, Tom pulled him by the sleeve and put a franc piece into his hand.

"Good luck!" said he.

The old fellow's fingers closed over the coin, and his ferret eyes flashed out a sidelong look of gratitude.

"The same to you, m'sieu', and much of it! May God watch over you!"

Then, shuffling along the gutter, the scavenger passed on into the night, once more deep in his trade, flicking his white scraps behind him with unerring aim.

" 'Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back,
Wherein he puts alms for Oblivion,' "

quoted Tom, as he turned toward the lower Boulevards again. "Do the lines run so, I wonder? It is so long since I read that—or anything. No matter; this life here is an open book that I have been reading pretty thoroughly. I could make a picture of it all, at a moment's notice, I dare say." So, forgetting himself in this new fancy, he studied each face—good, bad, or indifferent—that passed, to compose the imaginary picture which, for all its variety of material, would hardly have been a pleasing one. "Ghouls and vampires!" he muttered, as, in what seemed an incredibly short space of time, he reached the brighter precincts of the Italiens; "it's unfair to put life to a test like that. I think the old chiffonnier's face was the best of the lot, as well as the happiest. My picture, when I paint it, shall be made up differently."

At a kiosk near by he bought a London paper, unfolding it then and there for the latest news from the trial of Leroux. To his surprise, a verdict had been reached, and it was an acquittal. According to the defence, the forgers had employed the Frenchman simply as a clerk in their Paris office, where, to cover their crimes, they had dealt honestly enough with shipments of gypsum. The evidence had failed to establish any guilty knowledge on his part, and Marmaduke Sylvester had testified strongly to his previous good character; he had therefore been discharged the day before.

"The benefit of the doubt!" thought Tom, as he walked on. A possibility of the man's inno-

cence had never occurred to him. Did not a line in his father's letter allude to Leroux as "one of our party?" But the letter had been scrawled in haste, and the phrase, perhaps, was not to be taken literally; Tom's prejudice against Leroux had really counted in his mind for more than the accusing words: he was innocent, undoubtedly. Nevertheless, Tom congratulated himself upon having escaped a summons to London, for or against him. His testimony would hardly have been so favorable as Marnaduke's. "They must have scented that letter sooner or later," he thought, "and it might have convicted him: it might with equal justice have convicted me. Did not I help my father to escape? Who, knowing that, would believe I was not his accomplice? What trifling accidents may turn the current of our lives! A careless word in a letter, a step in the dark this way or that way! We live always in the moment, and each one that passes may work changes in us which will last a lifetime. The decisive instant gives no sign of its approach. I turn now into this empty café, and who can say that I shall go out of it the same man? Not I, who know best the little that there is to know concerning me."

Making this reflection, Tom stepped from the half-light of the street into the brilliant Café Napolitain, a favorite resort of those who follow the artistic professions. Their faces give the place an agreeable individuality; poets and painters, men of letters, more or less distinguished, are often to

be seen there, but just now its patrons of the night chose to sit outside under the leaves. The two small rooms, all white-and-gold and mirrors, were deserted, and Tom, liking them the better for that in his present mood, took a table near one of the open windows which had often before been his. The waiter, bringing the *petit verre* and the file of an evening paper, saluted him as an old acquaintance, and then whispering, "Does Monsieur see whom we have with us to-night?" indicated by a movement of his shoulders two men who sat just beyond the window, and in the same triumphant whisper spoke their names.

They were both famous writers of the day, one of whom Tom already knew by sight; the other he had often wished to see, and he stole a look at him now over his newspaper. The man was talking earnestly, with much gesticulation; his comrade replied in similar emphatic fashion, thus making their conversation entirely distinct. They were clearly aware of Tom's presence; clearly, too, that did not matter, for their talk had nothing confidential in its nature. All the world might have listened to it, as Tom did, in spite of himself, held there by a new, strange interest in every word.

"And so Gaston stays in St. Petersburg," said one. "Malheur à lui!"

"Pourquoi, malheur?" the other asked.

"Pourquoi, pourquoi? He is a Frenchman, mon ami; his first duty is to his country. Je ne comprends pas ton pourquoi."

"But if he wins distinction——"

"Distinction? Bah! He will never win respect from thoughtful men. He will live an exile to the last, secretly despised by those whose manners and customs he has adopted. He will be like that American we met last night, sneering at his country, which he does not know; they tell me he has not seen it in twenty years."

"Yes, they love their Paris, those Americans."

"Let them build a Paris of their own, then. They do us more harm than good; we do not want them. If their land were a barren isle of the sea, which it is not, they should improve and cultivate it. It rests with them to make it better, not to expatriate themselves, like Gaston."

"Who knows? He may come back."

"Never; he has made his choice. After the fifth year one does not come back. It is a proverb."

"After all, what is he to you? Why take him so seriously?"

"Because I think you envy him at heart. I will speak more seriously still. Look at me! I began life a clerk in the factory of the Chemin de Fer du Nord. There, curved at my desk like a cog-wheel, in rare moments and stealing hours from the night, I had ideas, wrote one book, then another, worked my way out of it to what poor fame I have. I am rich now—they photograph me; I am free to breathe, I live. Well, I swear to you, I would give up all to-morrow, and go back for life to the

smoke and oil of that hell on earth, rather than do what Gaston has done. Speaking with all the seriousness of one whose tête de veau is in every shop-window, there is no wretch so pitiable to me as the man who has deliberately forsworn his country."

"Agreed, agreed! And on my account, you may tranquillize yourself. Look around you! Do you think I could give up all this? No; I am too good a Parisian."

"Chacun son goût! All this is a spot upon the map of France—no more. I like my own Côte d'Or better, where my good father tends his vineyards. Allons donc! Let us go home to bed, that we may do a little work to-morrow, since I have forced you to agree with me."

Arm in arm the two friends strolled away, and Tom watched them until they were lost in the crowd. The file of *Le Temps* lay in a crumpled heap at his feet, but he did not care to read it now. He went his own lonely way, absorbed in thought, with his hands in his pockets, his hat pressed down over his eyes, until all at once his steps were checked by a hand laid heavily upon his shoulder.

It was only Gresham Mallow, who spoke first of their former clerk's acquittal, and then, taking Tom's arm, proposed that they should walk on together, as he had something more—something of importance—to say. His face still retained the worn look that had settled down upon it since the

failure, but there was a new elation in his tone and manner for which Tom could not account.

"The creditors have signed, bless them! almost to a man," he began lightly. "A settlement will be reached at the meeting to-morrow, Lerolle assures me. It's been a damned hard pull, my boy, but I'm out of the woods at last."

"Ah!" said Tom. "So much the better, then—for you."

"For me, yes!" laughed the other; "the point is well taken. But hang those cursed sharks, I say, who tried to drive me to the wall! And now, between ourselves, I've made a fresh combination on a very different basis. At the earliest possible moment, I start in under a new firm name with the best of auspices."

"With your brother and Marmaduke, I suppose."

"By no means. I wash my hands of them, they of me. They choose to go their own gait, and I have nothing to say against that; but it's a long lane for them, I fear."

"You will be alone, then?"

"Yes. That is to say, with a silent partner. Now, my point is this. You must be stroke oar of my boat. I like you and I want you. I speak thus early, in order to secure you without fail."

"I am much obliged to you," said Tom, "but——"

"As for the pay," broke in Gresham, "we won't quarrel about trifles. Call it double what you

drew from the defunct house of Mallow & Co. You are a valuable man, more so now than ever——”

“It is useless,” said Tom, withdrawing his arm instinctively; “I cannot accept the place.”

“What! Are you pledged to the others?”

“No; not that, but——”

“But what, in Heaven’s name?” said Gresham, coming to a standstill, and looking him squarely in the face. “Don’t decide hastily; take time to consider it. Look here! Between ourselves, you understand, I don’t mind telling you what my combination is. I am going to marry Mrs. Brisbane—there’s a silent partner for you.”

“Mrs. Brisbane!” Tom repeated; “who is she?”

“Surely you know. Mrs. Brisbane, the rich widow—the richest English resident in Paris. You must have seen her.”

Tom had seen and now remembered perfectly the odious, vulgar woman to whom Gresham had paid his court on the night of their dinner at the Café de la Paix. A woman old enough to be his mother! And she had bought him with her millions; his way of referring to her was an admission of the fact. But why should he not admit it frankly? That on his side, at least, this was a mere business contract, into which love entered not at all, must be evident to the dullest comprehension.

“I congratulate you,” he said, coldly. “That is

a splendid combination. I am sorry that I can take no part in it."

"Why not, man alive, if you have no other offer? Why can't you?"

"Because I am going back to America; that's all."

"To America!" cried Gresham, in angry surprise. "Why, not a week ago, you said that was the last thing you would do."

"Well, I have changed my mind."

"Changed your mind—like the women!" Gresham sneered. "Don't be a fool. You're not in earnest."

"Entirely. As to the folly, that's a matter of opinion. I have never supposed I was one of the seven wise men."

"Come, come; I won't take 'no' for an answer. I give you three days to decide—between ourselves, understand me."

"Merci!" returned Tom, with a smile. "If I change my mind again—like the women—you shall hear from me. Good-night, and good luck to you!"

"You are making the mistake of your life!" retorted Gresham, savagely, breaking from him with such energy as almost to knock down a young girl, richly dressed, who had shot an ineffectual glance at him as she sauntered by. "Oh, pardon, madame!" and he dashed away.

"Coquin d'étranger!" muttered the girl, turning on her heel with a scornful look at Tom,

who had scarcely noticed her, as she passed out of range up the Rue Caumartin, to which their walk had brought them.

“Not if I were offered half the fortune!” Tom thought. “To sell himself for that woman’s money-bags—it is contemptible. So the jilt is jilted, after all. Poor Hannah Lisle! I’ll swear she meant to be Mrs. Gresham Mallow. The curious part of it all is that I don’t seem to care now what becomes of her. I have had too much on my mind, perhaps, to care for anything.”

CHAPTER II.

ADIEU AUX FRANÇAIS!

A SOUNDER sleep than he had known for weeks strengthened Tom in his resolution. His first waking thought was that, with his mind made up, the sooner the homeward step were taken the better. An hour later, accordingly, he was in the steamer-bureau under the Grand Hotel, engaging passage for the native shores he had sworn to revisit only at the last extremity, with as much earnestness as if Eldorado lay beyond them. A fast ship would sail from Havre in three days; a faster one, less crowded, a week later; and since, after all, there was no desperate hurry, Tom chose this second date, ordered his passage-ticket filled up on the spot, and then turned into the telegraph office to cable Grip the news. Out upon the sunny Boulevard again, he stood still a moment looking up and down its length, and sighed. It was very pleasant, all this; and, though he was doing what he conceived to be right in leaving it, the ways of life here had become second nature to him. They were no longer his. He found himself transformed in five minutes from an old resident of conscious superiority to a beggarly factor

of the floating population. Already his farewells had begun. Mentally bestowing them at every turn in his walk, he went off to the Saint Lazare Station, and there took the train for a village, ten miles out, to which Norman Mallow had transferred himself, after the failure, from motives of economy. Tom did not know the place, and was somewhat surprised to be set down in a wilderness of scrubby beeches, apparently beyond the pale of civilization. But there presently rattled up a dingy omnibus of "correspondance," whose bloused, unkempt conductor informed him that the village itself stood off the line, beyond the wood, a mile and a half away. Did he know Monsieur Mallow? Yes, certainly, he knew—Rue de la Croix d'Or, on the left! Thereupon, lashing his horses, after ten minutes of dusty turnpike and many yards of primitive pavement, horribly rough, he deposited his only passenger at a door in a mildewed wall to which still clung an *affiche* announcing a country fair for a date six weeks old. In spite of its resplendent name grass grew in the long, narrow street, where not so much as the click of a wooden shoe was to be heard. The green paint had blistered from the house-door and shutters; and the bell responded to Tom's vigorous pull by a prolonged jangle quite in keeping with this forlorn aspect.

Norman sat writing, alone, in a musty little salon, and his face glowed with pleasure at sight of Tom's.

"All hail!" said he.

"Hail and farewell!" Tom replied. "I am off for the Americas."

"À la bonne heure! It is the best thing you can do, perhaps; though I must admit that I am very sorry. You see, Marmaduke and I had agreed to make you an offer—a small one, of course; we couldn't have promised you much. We are going to begin the world again together in London."

"I see—alone."

"Alone, yes," said Norman, darkening. "You know what Gresham has done?"

"Yes. I heard it from him last night."

"Ah, indeed!" continued Norman, savagely. "He made you an offer then, I'll swear. If you had accepted it, I should never have forgiven you. What he is doing is infamous, and I have told him so."

"His offer did not tempt me," said Tom, quietly. "When do you leave this place?"

"I—very soon. My wife and the infants will stay on here for the present. The place isn't so bad as it looks. This room is our worst; in the winter it must be a fine one for mushrooms. Come and inspect our *corps de logis*. The children are making a picnic in the forest, but Madame will be delighted to see you."

He led the way through the rooms, which he displayed one by one in mock triumph, and finally went out into a sunny garden behind the house. Under an arbor, built against the wall at its farther end they found Mrs. Mallow, busy with the house-

hold needlework which lay strewn around her. She was in high spirits, and welcomed Tom most cordially. Then, after picking a carnation for his button-hole and throwing open the shutters in the wall that he might admire their view, which extended, as she declared, half-way to Paris, she departed to prepare breakfast; but this only when the condition of his stay into the late afternoon had been imposed. The meal, of the simplest quality but excellently cooked, was served there under the vine-leaves, and it awakened in Tom a new admiration for his hostess, who laughed and chatted as if the meaning of the word misfortune had never been brought home to her.

"How is Norman looking, do you think?" she asked, when her husband, going in search of pipes and tobacco, gave her a few moments with Tom alone.

"Better. He will pull through, I know."

"I mean that he shall," she said, emphatically. "Gresham's affair has hurt him more than anything. After their quarrel he broke down completely."

"They have quarrelled then?"

"Oh, yes; there was a frightful scene. Can you wonder? That woman! To think that my joke about her should come true! The news is all over Paris now, I suppose. How did you hear it?"

"From Gresham, himself, with his other business plans."

"Business plans!" echoed Mrs. Mallow, scornfully. "Don't believe him—he hasn't any. He will just live for the rest of his days upon that awful woman; you will see. It's an unspeakable shame, so—so caddish, that's the only word; when he was practically engaged to Hannah Lisle, as, of course, you knew."

"No," said Tom, "I only inferred that."

"Well, it is the truth; and Miss Lisle is much to be congratulated upon her escape; that's all I can say. Hush! Here is Norman; not another word!"

The pipes were filled and refilled many times before the "correspondance" came. Somewhat wistfully the Mallows followed him to its door with friendly injunctions to keep them in remembrance. Unconsciously they had taken good care of that themselves. Henceforth his life and theirs must lie wide apart, he thought, as he whirled away. But he carried with him a fine, ineffaceable example of mutual confidence and devotion, resisting life's reverses sturdily without complaint. The uses of adversity might prove sweet eventually to every man; yet the author of that proverb had man and wife in mind he was sure.

The last days flew fast, and his dying moments, as Tom said, were all for places not persons. His best friends were at home, and he was going back to them. But the pictures and statues, the bridges and fountains, and all the wonders of old Paris, from St. Étienne du Mont to the beautiful Place

des Vosges, he was leaving, perhaps, forever. One by one he gave his mute, mournful farewell to each, and stretching his tired legs afterward at the door of some favorite café, over a glass of Amer Picon, framed golden projects for return, which, an hour later, he found delusive and visionary. On the last night of all he put on evening dress, and dined luxuriously at the Café Riche; then contemplating the theatre-pillar to find "Adrienne Lecouvreur," announced at the Français, with Bressant, Favart, Plessy and Got in the cast, decided to pass his evening there. But that array of names had drawn the town. There was a long line before him at the ticket-window, and when at last he reached it no places in the orchestra were left.

"But where am I to sit, then?" Tom asked, helplessly.

"Possibly in the parterre, Monsieur," said the man, politely. "Demandez à l'autre guichet."

There, indeed, he found room, but only in the last rows, close under the boxes. The theatre, though not yet full, was all bustle and excitement. Just over his head the little, dark *baignoires* were filling up one after another, while the *avant-scène* remained vacant, cavernous. Those distinguished patrons, however, came late habitually. By ten o'clock there would not be a vacant corner from floor to ceiling. In a little while the curtain rolled away, and the splendid performance absorbed Tom completely. What a Maurice de

Saxe! What an Adrienne! It seemed incredible that this pair of lovers, with their youthful fire, their expressive, unfurrowed faces, rich voices and incomparable diction, could have been counterfeiting similar passions between these walls for a score of years. After the first act none of the men in Tom's row went out, but settled down in place over their evening papers; and, rather than to struggle by them, Tom, who had provided himself with a paper, too, in good bourgeois fashion, followed their example. As the curtain was going up he heard a movement in the *baignoire* behind him; then the sound of a voice startling in its familiarity. When the scene was well advanced he looked round cautiously, and saw that he had not been deceived. There, in the dark, sat Una Vandermere, no, not Una Vandermere—the Baronne de Rozières. Behind her stood her husband, paying no heed to the play, but inspecting the boxes minutely through his glass. They were alone.

When the curtain came down again, there was a general movement toward the open air. Tom fell in with it, and, as he slipped by, observed that the Baron had also gone out, leaving Una to herself. "Why not say good-by to her?" he thought, knowing by experience that the courteous ways of the place would admit of this if he desired it. So, following the narrow passage to the street, he went along to the grand entrance and presented himself there.

"I wish to join friends in Box 18," he stated,

with a random shot at the number, since it was necessary to have one.

"Certainly, monsieur," assented the *gardien*, immediately passing him in without question.

Once there, in a moment's reconnaissance he marked her down easily; the door stood half open, and when he knocked her voice replied:

"Oh, Tom!" she cried, starting up with heightened color at the recognition. Her tone, however, was cordial, and she gave him her hand warmly. She wore black and crimson combined with very striking effect, and at her neck a large diamond set in rubies. The stone flashed as she turned, and Tom knew that he had never seen a finer one; but he did not know that this diamond was historic, the pendant of a famous *rivière* which De Rozières had inherited and squandered, inch by inch, according to his need. This jewel was the last, and he had married just in time to save it.

In spite of these brilliant accessories Tom saw instantly that Una's looks were by no means at their best. Her face was not only excessively pale, but also slightly rouged. And the result came very near to ghastliness. Her eyes shone with unnatural light; after the first moment he could not catch a glance from them, though they moved restlessly, in every way but his; her hands were restless, too; her lips seemed to have lost the power to smile, and her talk touched feverishly upon one thing after another, as if she feared that the slightest pause in it would bring down upon

her some allusion to the past. Nothing, of course, could have been further from Tom's thoughts than to make himself disagreeable to her in that way. Following her lead, therefore, he spoke of the play and its performers, the traditions of the theatre, and such generalities as would suggest themselves to chance acquaintances with no common past between them. But, disturbed by this new phase in their relations, he very soon began to think of going; whereupon, divining this, she gave their talk a turn which detained him.

"And the Mallows?" she asked. "Have you seen them? Tell me about them and about yourself. What are you to do?"

It took some time to dispose of this complicated question, and Tom concluded his reply to it by the statement that he was to leave Paris the next morning.

"I see," she mused; "since Hannah Lisle has gone."

"No," he returned, quickly. "I have recovered from that madness. Hannah Lisle is nothing to me—absolutely nothing."

"Oh, you men!" said Una, with a toss of her head. "You are all alike. She has good cause to hate you—all of you."

"Some of us, perhaps. As for myself, she did her best to disenchant me, and, happily, she has succeeded. I am not going away on her account."

"Then it is sans adieu, I hope; you will come back."

"That is extremely doubtful."

"Then I am extremely sorry. We were good friends once, and now—what a queer life the world leads us! Who knows if we shall ever meet again!"

"Why not, many times? If not here, you will be coming to America, and then——"

"Never!" declared Una, with a bitter laugh. "I have settled all that. I could not endure America for a single day. I am a Frenchwoman."

"You have changed, it is true," said Tom, gravely. "So have I, for that matter. Our affairs seem to be adjusted for the moment without the camaraderie. But I do not like your saying that we were good friends *once*. Why should not our friendship hold in spite of time and place, through all changes?"

She did not return his friendly look, but stared straight out into the great hollow of the theatre, while a faint flush slowly overspread her sallow cheeks.

"I said that because I know what you must think of me," she replied.

"Evidently you do not," he said, emphatically. "You did what seemed best to you for your own happiness, without advice, as we all must when our inevitable moment comes. The thing is done, and it is your affair, not mine. I have no right to think about it at all."

"You were more than kind," she murmured, almost inaudibly, with lowered eyes and face. "You

would have helped me if I had only permitted it. And I—I lied to you. I could not help it.”

“I know,” he returned. “I understand. I did not blame you ; I do not now. Otherwise, I should not be here. I assure you that my thoughts of you are all good wishes.”

She looked up at him, at last, and smiled. But the smile was forced and sarcastic ; instead of lighting up the face, as in the old days, it seemed now to harden its expression. “Thank you,” she said. “My wishes are accomplished. I am happy—very happy. You will think that, and always the best of me you can, won’t you ?”

Tom rose and gave her his hand. “Good-night!” said he.

“No!” she objected. “The curtain is going up, and I am alone. Stay through the act with me.”

“But the Baron will come back. I do not know him. I shall be in the way.”

She laughed dryly. “He would not bite you, I suppose,” she retorted. “But he will not come back till midnight. He has gone to his club. Stay!”

Tom hesitated, and was then about to take the seat again, when there came a knock at the door. “The Baron!” he thought. But upon Una’s answer to the knock, it was, somewhat to Tom’s surprise, the Vicomte de Marsan who joined them.

“Monsieur Sylvestre!” he said, with a strong grasp of the hand, after giving Una a formal greeting. “What! you are going?”

“Yes. Good-night!”

"Good-night!" said Una, without the smallest pretence of a wish to keep him longer. And as the door closed he saw the Vicomte seated in his place.

Busy with strange thoughts, Tom turned into the beautiful foyer, and walked there up and down. But for the attendants, who regarded him with silent wonder, he had its treasures all to himself. At another time he would have studied them, as he had often done before; now, he passed them by repeatedly without a look, and finally, stepping out upon the balcony overhanging the little square in which three important streets come together, he leaned upon the rail, alone. Below him went on the movement of the city; cabs whirled by, boys cried the evening papers, the withered old liquorice-seller commended her drink hoarsely to a jingling accompaniment of glass and metal: "Un sou le bock! Réglisse, m'sieurs et m'dames, fraîche et bonne!" But Tom heard and perceived these things vaguely. He was thinking—thinking of Una's talk, and, particularly, of one phrase in it that kept recurring to him. "You would have helped me, if I had only permitted it." There was a world of sorrowful meaning in that one word, "only." Her use of it in that connection had confirmed the sad impression conveyed by all her looks and gestures. She had gained her point, but in spite of her direct assertion to the contrary, she was not happy, she was miserable. And what would come of it? More craving for excite-

ment, no doubt, more indirectness, more deceit, more lying. To what end? Then there flashed into Tom's mind a profound observation of the cynic, Stendhal, "Your true intriguer loves intrigue for intrigue's sake, not for the end it serves." That, perhaps, was the key to Una's character. And, if so, there could be no possible help for her. She had taken the helm into her own hands, and would steer her own course recklessly. The better to pursue it, she had changed her nationality. She sailed under French colors now, and her ship was launched on the Parisian sea.

A stir behind him roused Tom from his reverie. A chattering crowd had thronged into the foyer; the act was over. He turned back and crossed to the staircase, stopping for one moment to take a last look at Houdon's wonderful statue of Voltaire. What a smile upon the face! Hard, mocking, heartless, it was the smile of modern Paris, the smile of intrigue, Una's smile. So, with Una always in his mind, he went down to his place in the parterre and watched the intriguing drama move along superbly to its tragic end. Before him were the woes of Adrienne and Maurice, the terrible vindictiveness of the Princesse de Bouillon. He looked on, admiring and applauding, convinced that to a higher point than this the player's art could not attain. But when he looked behind him it was to find that the screen in the rail of the dark *baaignoire* had been drawn up. And Una he saw no more.

CHAPTER III.

GRIP'S WAY—AND TOM'S

LONG before the steamer reached its pier on the North River Tom distinguished Grip's face in the crowd pressing forward to the water's edge. He had expected this ; for Grip had immediately sent a long cable message in reply to his, expressing great pleasure at the news of Tom's return, and promising to meet him upon his arrival in New York. He wondered if he himself were as much changed as his brother at first appeared to be ; it was not the old Grip at all, but another fellow altogether, more mature, stouter, graver, too, after the first smiling welcome. This impression of change gave him an uncomfortable feeling, which, however, he was careful not to betray by any word or sign ; and in the course of half an hour it all wore away. The new Grip became the only Grip. How could he have had any other in his mind ? He accustomed himself less easily to the queer look of the city as they drove up through it. The streets were dirty and shabby, mean and crude beyond expression ; fine buildings stood linked with ugly ones in a hopeless jumble of disproportionate, unrelated parts ; there was no

attempt anywhere at symmetry or uniformity of line. His thoughts reverted to the fine distances left behind him at every turn in Paris—to the Rue Royale, the Boulevard Malesherbes, the Avenue Marigny, where all the new construction had been carefully thought out with an eye to the general effect, a sense of fitness, conforming with admirable success to a standard of beauty, of which all here showed not the faintest conception. Though he judiciously kept this comparison to himself, Grip seemed to read between the lines a little, for he said: "It all looks very strange to you, doesn't it?"

"No," returned Tom, diplomatically. "I have been dreaming, that's all; and it takes time to wake up. I shall get used to things in an hour or so."

"You look hungry," Grip decided. "Come, let's go to breakfast."

They made, accordingly, a long, elaborate meal in the sunny corner of a splendid restaurant, where the food was served in the French manner, by French waiters, from a French *menu*. The place was over-decorated, and too uncomfortably vast for Paris; otherwise, Tom might have forgotten for the moment that the bright street at his elbow was not the Boulevard. He had many questions to ask, and asked them eagerly; so that their talk was confined to American associations in general and those of Worthingham in particular. As it progressed Tom gradually picked up many

upon one corner of it appeared conspicuously the printed name and address of a business house, at which he was both surprised and interested — "Bolton & Buck, Dealers in Hardware." The letter, however, proved to be not from the house, but from the junior partner. It began with hearty words of rejoicing at Tom's return to "God's country." Then, after the formal announcement of his admission to the firm, which had just occurred, the writer went on to say that his own place, thus vacated, was by common consent held open for Tom in case he wanted it. Did he? Mr. Buck hoped so most emphatically, since nothing could give him greater pleasure than to get his old comrade back into a new harness. The terms would be so and so.

They were certainly liberal enough, and Tom, as he folded the letter with a sigh, felt that his fate was sealed by them irrevocably. The offer was much too good to be refused. At this stage of his affairs he could not afford even to think of refusing it. Yet the prospect seemed dull and commonplace beyond expression. He saw himself at the old desk, deplorably overwhelmed by the old endless figures, his only possible release being admission to partnership in his turn, after countless years of slavery. He could read the sign already in imagination: "Bolton, Buck & Co.," with a very large "Bolton, Buck" and a very small "Co." That would be the end of him, if he had good luck. Well, he must make the best of it, and

extract all the bitter pleasure he could from doing what he conceived to be his duty. Any round of daily life here, he felt, would prove insipid after the excitement of that upon which he had just turned his back. What did the little better or the little worse signify, since there was so slight a choice between them? In making this reflection he forgot, as youth is apt to do, that his golden draught of Paris had not been all unclouded. The gall in the cup had sunk completely out of sight, leaving the bubbles and the froth brighter for the glow of recollection. So, with this mellow light of the past softening the glare of the present, he went out, hailed a cab, and drove across the town to Miss Lisle's door.

The house stood in a quiet square, full of trees and flowers, east of Broadway. The drawing-rooms, very cool and dark, showed by their semi-dismantled condition that the family had only halted here for a few days on the way out of town. Hannah came down alone, looking well but decidedly older, Tom thought. Her manner was gracious and courteously sympathetic, yet subdued almost to heaviness. The mocking high spirits which formerly had stimulated and fascinated him seemed replaced now by a melancholy mood. She hated all things here, and loved every stone in Paris. How different this from that other home of theirs on the Champs-Élysées! Had she been a man with the power to act independently she would never have left it; she could not under-

stand Tom's readiness to accept what was to her inharmonious and depressing. As she talked on in this strain her tone of discontent became almost querulous, and Tom listened to it more and more impatiently. The gap that had already opened between them appeared to widen with every word. He cut his visit short in consequence, but not before mentioning Grip, as if casually, really with malice aforethought. Hannah, though evidently prepared for this bit of craftiness, could not quite conceal the fact that she was disconcerted by it. She was careful to repeat Grip's name, it is true, and even to ask a question about him; but she did this with a certain constraint which Tom noted in mingled amusement and displeasure. Then he went away, hoping that they might meet again very soon, at the same time reflecting that the date of their next interview was likely to be remote; and sorry, a moment afterward, that he had not turned his sharp little search-light straight upon Gresham Mallow. What, he wondered, would have been the effect of that?

This quarter of an hour had stirred up in him so strong a feeling of opposition that he found himself looking on the bright side of the dreary prospect from his window of the elevated train which rattled him down town with business-like rapidity. American enterprise was certainly impressive in its vastness, and its energy was astonishing. Everything and everybody seemed to go by steam at the rate of an express. The crowd

below, when he became one of it, jostled and annoyed him, until he had adopted its pace unconsciously. He was not in the slightest hurry, but could not help hurrying from the mere force of example. The same speed pervaded Hal's office, where they told him that Mr. Rodney had gone out, to return shortly. Accordingly he waited, watching men come and go, and the tape of the Stock Exchange unwind itself noisily, yard by yard. In time, with a rush, Hal returned, much disguised by a transforming beard, but heartily glad to see his old friend. They compared notes disjointedly through a series of interruptions, and upon inquiry about his plans Tom spoke of Mr. Buck's letter.

"For heaven's sake!" said Hal, knitting his brows. "You won't think of doing that?"

"I must," Tom replied, "if nothing better offers—at least for a time."

"Ah! for a time, yes!" repeated Hal, discreetly assenting, and turning off to other things.

When Tom invited him to luncheon, he laughed. "I have had beer and six oysters," said he; "that's my luncheon. It's a devil of a day. No, don't go yet. I'm here, if wanted, that's the main point. And I haven't half seen you."

So Tom stayed on a few minutes longer, and took away with him the hope of seeing his friend again very soon in Worthingham, where Hal, it appeared, frequently turned up for a night and a day. He lunched alone at a marble counter, from

which silent men in a surging crowd absorbed food for nourishment only, like machines. Then he was whirled back up town; and, at the hotel, he found Grip awaiting him eagerly.

"Well?" said the elder brother, with a sharp, inquiring look.

"Well!" echoed Tom, not feeling sure that he understood to what the inquiry referred.

"Did you see her? Was she at home?"

"Hannah? Oh, yes; she was at home. But I almost wish she hadn't been."

Grip paced the room silently for a moment with his hands in his pockets. "Why?" he asked, after the pause.

"Because she has changed so much that there is very little enjoyment in talking with her. To be sure, she has had her little experience, which, no doubt, was trying in its way. But even before that——"

"What do you mean?" Grip broke in. "What experience? I am completely in the dark. Please enlighten me."

"Of course you don't know. How should you?" said Tom, with a shade of conscious pride in his superior knowledge. "She has been disappointed, that's all." Thereupon he proceeded to give a detailed account of Gresham Mallow's attentions to Miss Lisle and her apparent acceptance of them, together with the inference, drawn from his own suspicious observation, which Mrs. Norman Mallow had confirmed. "And I must say that I

think she has been served exactly right," he concluded.

Grip, who had stood still, listening without comment, now began to stride back and forth again.

"I am glad you told me this," said he, "very glad; for it explains a great deal that I could not comprehend. But you are too hard upon her—unjustly hard."

"Why?" asked Tom, warmly. "She is caught in her own trap, and I hope it will teach her a good lesson. Hannah Lisle is perfectly heartless. She doesn't ring true, and she never did. She has been playing fast and loose, and——"

"Fast and loose!" repeated Grip. "With whom?"

Tom opened his lips to speak, and suddenly found that he had already gone farther than he meant to go—too far, in fact. "With you!" he wanted to say; but he only grew confused at his own indiscretion, saying nothing.

Grip looked at him askance, and smiled. "Tom," said he, "you don't know what you're talking about, and your judgment is all wrong, very naturally. Between ourselves, it is only fair to tell you that I have offered myself to Miss Lisle, and that she has refused me."

"Confound her!" Tom retorted. "That ends it then!"

"Ends it? Do you mean that, if you loved a girl, you would give her up like that?"

"Of course I do. One 'no' would be enough. She should never get the chance to refuse me a second time."

"Then you would make a great mistake," said Grip, quietly, "if you loved her. But I am inclined to think you do not know what love is."

"Perhaps not," stammered Tom, beginning to suspect that, in spite of his vast experience, he had something left to learn.

"When you fall in love," Grip continued in the same quiet tone, "you may find it best to put your pride in your pocket. If you are loved at sight, as men sometimes have been, you will be very lucky. If not, I hope you will make up your mind to wait a little, rather than bring accusations of utter heartlessness because the woman you care for doubts and hesitates, or even has the bad taste to prefer some other man to you."

"I beg your pardon, Grip. I did not quite mean——"

"Oh, never mind that. I only wanted to show you that Hannah, perhaps, is less to blame than you think. Knowing what I know now, I understand her and sympathize with her, and think she is not to be blamed at all, but pitied. I only wish I had known it three days ago. I should then have waited a little, myself, before asking her for the second time."

"What! You have asked her twice!" cried Tom, in amazement.

"Yes," said Grip, stoutly. "And I shall ask

her again, and again, too, perhaps. You see, I love her, and have not yet given up hope that she may, some day, love me."

"If she doesn't," said Tom, "she ought to be drawn and quartered!"

Grip laughed. "This is between ourselves, you understand," said he. "But have you packed? It is time to be thinking of our train."

An hour later they were gliding along together through the open country, at which Tom stared in wonder with eyes long used to other scenes. The crudeness of it all struck him at first curiously. There were no trim hedgerows here, no garden-like smoothness of the highest cultivation. The walls were very rough; so were the fences, with glaring advertisements daubed upon them. Even the soil looked hard and stony, and there were acres of waste land that no plough had ever re-deemed at all. But, on the other hand, the green seemed intensely bright, without a trace of gray in it. And the very wildness had its own peculiar charm that he had quite forgotten. He looked at Grip, who sat beside him, silent, absorbed in a book; then, turning back to the landscape, which began to grow more and more familiar, he said to himself that it was a good thing to be at home.

CHAPTER IV.

NEW TIMES—NEW FACES

“WELL, how do you like America?” asked Mr. Buck, with humorous intention on the following Monday morning, as, coming in early, he found Tom at his new post in the old office for the first time.

“Very much!” said Tom, laughing. “How do you?”

“Well, I like that! I want you to understand, Thomas, that I’m American to the backbone.”

“Excuse me,” continued Tom; “I was forced to judge you by the outside, which is no more American than mine. Those clothes are English. This too!” he added, taking up the hat which Mr. Buck had placed upon his desk, and pointing at the name of a London maker in its crown.

“That’s so!” admitted Mr. Buck, now pleasantly confused. “You’ve struck my weak point, sure enough. I ain’t the spread-eagle feller that I was; I don’t wear the stars and stripes wrapped round me as I’d ought to do. Mrs. Buck is terrible jealous of these clothes. She’s figured out that she could actually have saved money by going with me—in dressmakers’ bills. And the next

time I go, she goes ; it can't be helped. That reminds me," he went on, looking about uneasily and lowering his voice to a whisper ; "that reminds me of a very peculiar thing. What do you suppose interested Mrs. Buck most of all the scenery I told her about in Europe ? You'll never guess. It was that garden place we visited."

"The Mabille!" said Tom, with a shout of laughter.

"Hush!" whispered Mr. Buck, giving him a cautionary grip of the arm. "Yes, she says I've got to take her there the next time we go. Can I?"

"Of course, if she wants to go, and understands——"

"Well, she does, and she won't let it rest. We've got to go out for a while next summer—on business, of course—if it's only for peace and quiet. I ain't much of a traveller, but I guess the hay-seed is shaken out of my hair. We all grow, Thomas, we all grow! And how do you find the books? Grown a little too, I suspect?"

"Yes," said Tom, "out of all remembrance. Please tell me what this means." And so the business of the week began.

The three days immediately preceding this one had taken a permanent place among Tom's agreeable recollections. Though Worthingham had extended itself on every side, and proved even uglier than his imagination pictured it, the outlying country, retaining a beauty that he had quite for-

gotten, struck him at once as lovelier than anything he had seen in France. Walking out into it with Jane, he had assured her of this, to her emphatic joy, which she privately communicated to her husband afterward, with the statement that she found Tom improved rather than spoiled by their years of separation. Tom mentally paid her a similar compliment, when the Larkins killed the fatted calf for him in his old home, now theirs. Married life and freedom from care had softened Jane. Her voice was of lower pitch; her opinions were less bluntly given, when she ventured to give them at all: since she now inclined to defer to Mr. Larkin in everything. As for him, Tom wondered why he had ever been called "Old Larkin." Except in a passion for statistics, too suggestive of the school-platform, he was as young as anybody; and absolute devotion to his wife gleamed through every look he gave her. The house had been changed in more ways than one, but the changes, like those of its inmates, were all for the better.

If Tom had really come into that ideal *château* on the Loire of his boyhood, he could not have been more warmly welcomed home. One by one his old friends hailed him with delight: Pug Stanhope first of all, in a grasp that nearly crushed the bones of Tom's hand. Sidney Stanhope, M.D. —as he would have preferred to be called— had developed enormously: lengthwise, crosswise, and all round, according to his friend's first thought. His hair was no longer red, but brown, and he wore

a huge mustache, very carefully tended. The expression of his bright blue eyes was at once frank and determined, indicating the quick perceptions of a strong, alert mind; while his features, though far from regular, had nothing repellent about them. "So ugly that he's handsome, like a bull-terrier," was Tom's summing up of him—unsspoken, of course. All the family were well, but looked older, Pug stated; "except Clover: she's just the same—away from home, though, now, on a visit. She'll be awfully sorry not to see you among the first." Tom signified his own regret, and then they talked on together, reviving old times and promising themselves new ones indefinitely.

Almost at the moment of arrival in the quarters which Grip had prepared for him, Tom had climbed the last staircase to call on Jerry Hazeltine. Here was the old landing on which he had hesitated tremulously years ago. But now a rosegeranium blossomed in the window, the door was freshly painted, and the whole place looked swept and garnished. Signs of a similar care were evident within, where dust was no longer the chief characteristic, and the scent of other flowers greeted him as he crossed the threshold. Old Jerry sat in the sunshine, smoking his pipe, and he started up with such eagerness as almost to overturn a small table on which books, newspapers, a tobacco-box, and various bottles and glasses stood within reach of his hand. The hand shook, and the two or three forward steps he made were shuffling and uncer-

tain. Tom would have helped him back ; but, with a smile, he objected, and returned to his place alone. How thin, how white, his face was ! He had grown painfully old in everything but his voice, which still rang with the sweet note that Tom so well remembered.

“ I have been a little under the weather,” he explained ; “ but I am better now—much better. It is good to see you. I want to hear all about it, Tom. Tell me the whole story—about your father, I mean. You saw him, didn’t you ? ”

Then for a whole hour he did little more than listen while Tom recounted the adventure with his father in all its details, from the first glimpse in the theatre to the miserable end. Much of the story Jerry knew already from Jonas Buck, but he was careful not to say so. He wanted to hear it from Tom’s own lips : and Tom told it vividly and well, surprising himself by his power to recall so many of his father’s words and gestures ; but they had sunk deep, as in all lives certain experiences will, never to be crowded out by those of after-years. When he produced the farewell letter, Mr. Hazeltine begged permission to look at it ; and, putting on his glasses, he nodded and sighed over the handwriting, which he immediately knew to be Tom Sylvester’s own.

“ Sad business ! ” he muttered, handing back the paper. “ Sad business ! Give me that book, please, will you ? The one farthest away, against the wall.” And when Tom had brought the vol-

ume of Shakespeare, wondering, old Jerry turned its leaves until he had found a line upon which he laid his finger.

Tom looked down, and read :

“ Nothing in his life
Became him like the leaving it.”

“ Poor Tom ! ” said Jerry, doubling back a corner of the page. “ That might have been his epitaph. And yet the manner of his death was, in itself, a crime. But he had his scruples, after all, and he did no permanent harm to you. Bless him for that, and God have mercy on his soul ! You are going ? ”

“ Yes,” said Tom, taking his hand. “ But I shall come again. We are near neighbors now, you know. It is very pleasant to be here and to find you so well and so comfortable.”

Jerry’s negative shake of the head must have been quite unconscious, for he answered with a smile : “ Well, yes ; and comfortable—very comfortable ! Looks better here, doesn’t it ? We have a housekeeper now, you see ; and women call sometimes. Your sister has been very kind to me ; Miss Stanhope too—Clover Stanhope. Remarkably fine girl that ! I want to talk to you about her. Come soon, my boy, come soon ! ”

Tom, on his way down, remembered a phrase in one of Clover’s letters alluding to a fondness for Mr. Hazeltine ; and he wondered, with a smile, if the old man had fallen in love with her. But he

failed to recollect the next clause of the letter which referred to him as the chief subject of conversation in their walks and talks together. This, though a statement of some importance, was one of the many things crowded out, for the time being, by more startling matters from Mr. Sylvester's mind.

His first Sunday morning had been ideally calm and bright—the very bridal of the earth and sky in Herbert's hymn; and nothing had seemed to Tom so homelike as the sound of the church-bells. He knew them all apart: they had not changed in the least; each stroke, on the contrary, served to bring back some memory of that far-off childhood when his brain had been crammed, not like Touchstone's, with observation, but with unsolved problems. What a queer, moody, disconsolate boy it was that the bells thus conjured up! He could see himself in the church-gallery, dreaming through the long service, and never once in touch with it, waked to semi-consciousness only by Mr. Lisle's personal peculiarities.

Mr. Lisle! He had not seen him yet. Why not slip out alone to his old place under the Ten Commandments, listen to the sermon if he could—at all events make himself known to the preacher after the benediction? He pursued this plan so promptly as to arrive among the first of the morning congregation, slowly gathering while he watched it from the gallery-pew, his right to which no one now disputed. Some familiar faces were absent; but there were

many that he knew, and many new ones. The elder Rodneys came; then Jane and Mr. Larkin, the former taking her mother's place beside their aunt. Strangers were ushered in behind them, but the Stanhope pew remained vacant, if Tom was correct in his identification of it. The voluntary thundered forth, drawing his attention up to the gilded pipes of the organ. When he turned back, one trim figure sat alone where he had decided that the Stanhopes should have been. It was Clover, who had come home the night before without his knowledge. Their eyes met upon the instant. She smiled faintly: it was as if she had counted upon finding him there in the seat which had so long been his. And Tom felt the comfortable glow of her silent welcome, rejoicing that the mysterious force of early association had impelled him not to disappoint her.

The service that morning was so far from dreary that Tom lost very little of it. Either Mr. Lisle had learned to pray more fluently, or he had become a master in the re-presentation of old material. His text was from Ezekiel: "And one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar." He made the sermon unusually short; and its closing words rose to a point of eloquence which impressed even the youngest of his hearers. "There are no walls," he said, "so sure as those of faith, no arches of a bridge so firm and unresisting. Shall I tell you my faith? If a bridge be builded from this world to the next,

it will be strong enough to bear us. But I think there will be no bridge, no causeway—only wings! wings!”

And now, when the hearts and minds of young and old alike were commended to “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding,” Tom suddenly found the moment for approaching Mr. Lisle to be inopportune. Instead of turning toward the pulpit, therefore, he waited at the foot of the gallery-stairs for Clover, who came and passed without seeing him; so quickly, too, that she had crossed the sunny street before he caught up with her. She did not seem to hear his step, but when he spoke she started and stopped, with a little cry of pleased surprise, immediately suppressed.

“Did I frighten you?” he laughingly inquired.

“A little,” she admitted, joining in the laugh. “But I am very glad you have come home,” she hastened to add, with heightened color. His own cheeks flushed, he could not have told why. Then they shook hands somewhat awkwardly, and walked slowly on in silence.

“Let us get out of the crowd,” suggested Tom, after a few moments of this constraint; and, speaking, he turned into a quiet street that led up from the thoroughfare over a shady hillside, as yet unspoiled by improvement. Its long vista of elm-trees was not the most direct way to the Stanhope’s door he knew; but he did not care for that, nor did Clover, it appeared, since with a smile she followed him.

Little by little their embarrassment wore away, until at last they talked freely and merrily as if there had been no break in their intimacy. Yet, practically, Tom was making a new acquaintance, and in the course of this first walk he gradually discovered two or three pleasant things: the prevalent cheeriness of his companion's disposition, and her remarkably keen sense of humor, for instance. She could not only take a joke, but she could make one also, turning the laugh back with great aptness of repartee. And she could do this without losing a particle of her refinement, natural and acquired, which revealed itself in a thousand little ways—in her well-modulated speech, in her gentle manners, in the neatness and trimness of dress that Tom had instantly observed at church. Her knowledge of books astonished him, though with ready tact she tried to conceal the fact that she knew more of them than he did. Thrust into the world of men, he, by degrees, had drifted away from the world of letters; deplorably, as even in the whirl of Paris, he had at times reflected. But here, in this commonplace New England town, discussion of the new books and the old ones had never failed to form one of the resources of daily life. Before ten minutes were gone Tom decided that he must make an effort to regain his former studious habits if he desired to keep up with Clover Stanhope.

The rapid flight of this summer noon-time gave the best of evidence that such a desire had already

awakened within him. It seemed impossible that half an hour could have passed when he was reminded by Clover that they were walking away from home. Turning, accordingly, and making several short cuts, they reached the Stanhope gate just at the dinner-hour. Then Clover urged him to come in so warmly that not to yield would have been uncivil. Mrs. Stanhope welcomed him most gladly, and shook her head with exaggerated disapproval when Pug chaffed him upon his church-going proclivities. The old doctor cracked his jokes, and they had a merry time of it at the table, where Tom was treated more as one of the family than as a guest. An excellent copy of a Raphael hung in the dining-room, and Tom's inquiry about it, just as the meal was over, led Clover to bring out a portfolio of foreign photographs that she might find one taken directly from the great original. As they looked from this to others, he was again astonished at her intelligent interest in the masterpieces, which she knew only by these colorless reproductions. She had chosen them all herself for some stated reason; and it pleased him to see how often her choice had fallen upon the things he liked best, before which he had often lingered in the Louvre. When they came to that splendid Titian Entombment—the glory of the Salon Carré—Clover held it back a moment for one more look.

"I don't half know them," she sighed. "I try to imagine what this is like, but it's of no use. I can't even guess the color of that robe."

"Why, that is yellow," said Tom, who knew the picture all by heart.

"Yellow!" she repeated. "How nice that you remember and can tell me."

"You must see the catalogue that Clover is making," said Mrs. Stanhope, pleased at this proof of her daughter's good taste and at Tom's sympathy with it; "I am sure it will interest you."

"Oh, no, mamma," protested Clover; "he knows so much more about these things than I do."

"Get it, my dear," her mother quietly insisted. "Tom's advice is worth having. There is to be a public exhibition of these photographs," she explained, when Clover was gone, "in one of the art rooms at the Library, and Clover has been asked to write the catalogue. She has made short biographies of all the great painters. They are very clever, but she needs advice; you will help her, won't you?"

"Of course I will," said Tom.

And so the afternoon had flown.

So, too, his remembrance of that day brightened all the next one, his first in the new harness. "I can't see what Pug meant," he thought more than once; "for Clover is anything but just the same!" She had been a very plain child, and in old times he had often noted those physical disadvantages in his mind against her. Now, her plainness did not affect him in the least. When she came between him and his ledgers, it was with the sweet, refined expression of her whole nature; with a very gentle

look, where, in truth, her one beauty had developed—in her clear, gray eyes.

When the books were closed for the day, Tom, feeling the need of fresh air, took a walk out of town toward the sunset; and, returning, encountered Clover, this time quite by accident. She was on her way home from the Library, where final arrangements for the exhibition were already in progress.

"I hope it will be a success," said she. "We gave one, last year, of the same sort which drew crowds of people. Even the mill-hands came."

Then Tom told her how the working men and women swarmed in the Luxembourg and the Louvre on Sunday afternoons; how he had repeatedly attached himself to some group for the sake of overhearing its comments, which were often original and singularly acute; a similar experience might be gained here, he supposed.

"Yes," said Clover; "but the problem here is a harder one. Our people have not the opportunities of your Frenchmen, with all those beautiful works of art ready to be seen and studied. They live here hemmed in by ugliness. Their standard of taste is all unformed. Yet their eagerness to learn is pathetic; it is a real thing. Go and see them, and convince yourself that the more beauty we can bring into their lives the better."

They had reached her door, and Tom said good-night, promising to go, and to go with her. Then he turned back into the long, irregular street,

through which the lamps were flashing up, one by one.

“She is right!” he muttered. “All this has not a single redeeming feature. In matters of taste America is the land of possibilities. Yet, after all, those matters are only secondary. We have the essential; why may we not hope for the ornamental too, in time? Thank God we are still young enough to learn!”

CHAPTER V.

THREE HAVENS

THE little glow of excitement induced by his return home soon wore away, and the next half-year of what Tom called his transplantation process moved slowly. His office-work proved not only confining but irksome, and often positively distasteful to him. All his years of patient industry in Paris counted now for nothing. He had lost their sense of power, which he could not help regretting. The helm had been snatched from his hand, and he was once more chained to the oar; the chain galled him painfully at times, but, of course, he never complained. The occupation gave him that independence of purse which was his first necessity, and must be endured accordingly. Most men were forced to do the things they disliked, he reasoned; sometimes all their lives. But this reasoning invariably made him sigh, and it was hard to seem uniformly cheerful under these circumstances; so hard, in fact, that Tom failed to overcome the difficulty. He wore, too often, an air of submission.

Mr. Buck noticed a certain depression in him, without fully comprehending its cause.

"You ain't quite up to concert pitch, Thomas," he said one day, after Tom had passed an evening at his house. "Do you know what Mrs. Buck thinks about you?"

"No," said Tom, brightening at once, as if to disprove the charge of low spirits. "What is her opinion?"

"She says you ought to get married."

"Married!" repeated Tom, briskly. "Does Mrs. Buck think I'm a millionaire?"

"No, she don't. Mrs. Buck, I want you to understand, is nobody's fool. But she knows I got married on less than you have—and I hadn't your prospects neither."

"Ah! Prospects make a difference, of course," Tom rejoined, discreetly. "I was not aware, though, that I had any definite ones."

"Well, I don't know as I had ought to have said that," continued Mr. Buck, with wrinkled brows, "and I don't know *but* I had. There ain't no immediate alarm about your future, I suspect. I wouldn't worry on that score, if I was you. I don't know nothin', of course, I only hear and see. You have a great many friends, Thomas, and some pretty good ones, too, I guess. And when a feller has a great many friends," he added, slowly and oracularly, "things happen to a feller sometimes that he don't sometimes expect."

The "feller" looked up and laughed. His old friend, however, did not return the look; he had said his say, and now solemnly drubbed the

desk with a penholder, leaving the prophetic utterance to stand for what it was worth. Puzzled by his manner, even more than by his words, Tom, nevertheless, thought it best to dismiss the subject lightly, and replied :

"You may thank Mrs. Buck for her advice, and say it shall have my careful consideration."

"I suppose that means a possible partnership," he reflected afterward. "More money, more work, more hardware ! And Mrs. Buck thinks I ought to get married ! It's very good of her ; I wonder, though, that she didn't go a step further and choose the wife." The truth was that while her solicitude upon this point amused him, it annoyed him also.

That afternoon he looked in upon Mr. Hazeltine, who had been losing ground of late. In fact, a young New York specialist, already consulted at various times about his case, was now summoned again. The old man sat in his chair as usual, resolutely cheerful ; but Tom, who had not called for a whole week, reproached himself with neglect at detecting an ominous change in him. The invalid declared, however, that he was in excellent health, and that the telegram had been sent to Dr. Jarvis, the specialist, against his will.

"He will come, and shake his head, and go away again. That's all it will amount to, unless——"

"His visit will do no harm, at any rate," said Tom, by way of encouragement.

"Perhaps not—especially as I know he is not coming wholly on my account. That reminds me of something I want to tell you confidentially, if you don't mind. It's about Clover Stanhope."

Tom, so far from minding, was at once consumed with curiosity. For in spite of that desire to talk with him about Clover, which Mr. Hazeltine had expressed on the day of his return, the talk had never taken place in all these months, though Tom had purposely brought her name into their conversation more than once. Her admirer seemed either to have forgotten that speech or to have experienced a change of heart in the matter, for he had invariably veered from the point after a few vague words in praise of Miss Stanhope's estimable qualities. Now, therefore, Tom pricked up his ears and wondered what was coming.

"I don't mind," said he, with an assumption of carelessness.

"Between ourselves, then," old Jerry continued, thoughtfully, "I am afraid that Clover Stanhope is making a serious mistake. There are superfluous women enough, in all conscience, for the work which she appears to consider the chief end of her existence. The work is good work, undoubtedly; but I cannot bear to think that she is to be wholly given up to it. I want her experience to be a broader and a brighter one. She is altogether too charming for a single life. She would make the best of wives."

"Upon what ground do you say this?" asked

Tom, yielding to a new, inexplicable anxiety that he could not conceal. "What reason have you for supposing that Miss Stanhope intends to remain single?"

"Dr. Jarvis, the specialist," said Mr. Hazeltine, weighing his words with the utmost deliberation, "has taken a great interest in her brother, who shows promise, he thinks. He also knows Miss Stanhope, whom, I believe, he met first in this room; though of that I am not perfectly sure, and it does not matter much. What matters more is that he has offered himself to Clover, and that she has refused him. The way in which I came to know this is unimportant. I know it, that's the main point; and I have reason to suspect that he is not satisfied with her answer, and will try again. He is one of the persevering sort, you see; he admires her immensely; they continue to meet, and are friends. That is the situation which worries me a little. As you are discreet, and won't let it go any farther, I thought there could be no harm in telling you."

"I don't see that anything can be done about it," said Tom.

"Perhaps not—perhaps not. But Dr. Jarvis would not be a bad match, as matches go; and I don't intend to sit by and see her narrow down into an old maid, if I can help it. I tell you, furthermore, that I won't have it. Single blessedness is, to my mind, a very doubtful blessing!" And, having committed himself to this sentiment

with some asperity, old Jerry added, more gently : "Now, I wish you would observe, and give me the result of your observations. You see Miss Stanhope oftener than I do. I may be all wrong. Look sharp, and tell me what you think—between ourselves, you know. There can be no harm in that, can there?"

"No," Tom admitted ; "I suppose not."

"Very well, then ; keep your eyes open!" Whereupon they shook hands and parted.

With his mind much disturbed and clouded, Tom went down the stairs, and, instead of turning in at his own door, made his way out into the street ; there, looking neither to the right nor to the left, he walked straight on at a rapidly increasing pace. To one who had followed and watched him, his absorbed face and frantic speed would have suggested that he was trying to escape from himself. But this he could not do ; for, though he heard nothing, saw nothing of what passed him by, he was haunted by his own thoughts, and their confusion irritated and distressed him. What did it mean? Until now he could have sworn that Clover Stanhope had no more intimate friend in the world than Tom Sylvester. Day by day, since his arrival in America, they had been thrown together, until he had become dependent upon this friendly relation. He had always the hope of meeting her, of walking and talking with her ; and, as he now saw, this hope had served more than anything else to make the oppressive

monotony of his new life endurable. But here was a man, of whose very existence he now heard for the first time, who not only had fallen in love with Clover, but also had broken the news to her. The affair must have sprung up and culminated while he was abroad, of course; that would explain it; he could hardly expect Miss Stanhope to tell him that in his absence she had acquired a lover. A lover! Not one of the vague sort, hovering about irresolutely—"attentive," according to the homely phrase—but a lover self-acknowledged, who had actually proposed to her! To be sure, she had rejected him. But he was not discouraged; he meant to try again: he was "persevering," so Mr. Hazeltine had declared. And if he were to overcome her doubts with his persistency? If she were to be worried into accepting his second offer? The fear caused Tom to turn pale and double his rate of speed unconsciously. He did not know this man Jarvis; he did not wish to know him: but he was fully convinced that this man was just the one to make Clover Stanhope miserable.

Having brought his ideas into marching order, as it were, by this decision, Tom proceeded to find fault with himself. Why had he not kept his wits about him, and made of Mr. Hazeltine further and more searching inquiries? He knew next to nothing, after all, and he might have known much—in particular, if Dr. Jarvis had answered the telegram, and if the date of his consultation were

fixed. The redoubtable specialist was perhaps already on his way—nay, already here perhaps, making the most of his time and tormenting poor Clover by fresh advances at this very moment. A harrowing possibility that left Tom limp and powerless! He could only strike the air with clenched fist and groan aloud.

“Tom—Tom! Why don’t you speak to me?” cried a voice that startled him. “Where are you going so fast? What on earth has happened to you?”

“Nothing—nowhere!” he stammered, brought up with a round turn. “Hannah—Miss Lisle! What does this mean? I did not know that you were in town.”

“You might have known it, if you had only gone home, instead of going—nowhere,” said Hannah, laughing. “I am here for a few days at my uncle’s, and I have just sent you a note. We want you to dine with us to-morrow, informally. And your brother, how is he?”

Tom took a vicious pleasure in saying that his brother was extremely well, and would accept the invitation, unless hindered by another engagement. Then he accepted it, himself, unconditionally. By this time he had recovered his natural manner, and could give Hannah at least three-fourths of his attention as they walked along.

Like Grip, she was extremely well, he decided. The tired, listless look in her face had disappeared. She barely alluded to her life in Europe, and of her

own country she seemed no longer sharply critical. She told him, instead, how agreeably her summer and autumn had been passed, what new faces she had met, what new things she had seen. "Fickle, like all the rest of them!" he thought perversely. "She has forgotten her disappointment—perhaps forgets even that she ever experienced one." Then it occurred to him that he might turn this conversation to his own account with a little care. And, by manœuvring so judicious that it could not have aroused the smallest suspicion on her part, he introduced the name of Dr. Jarvis and inquired if she knew him.

Hannah answered affirmatively. They were old acquaintances, it appeared.

"What is he like?" asked Tom.

"He is not at all bad looking," said Hannah, taking the question first in its most literal sense, as women are apt to do. "He thinks perhaps a little too favorably of Dr. Jarvis," she added, after a moment's pause. "But that is not unnatural; he is very brilliant, very skilful, they say."

"Ah! He gets on in his profession then?"

"Oh, yes! He will make a great name for himself undoubtedly; he is so energetic, so persevering——"

That was enough. The objectionable word struck Tom like a stiletto. He asked no more questions, and let Hannah drift back unaided to subjects in which she took a stronger personal interest. His continued preoccupation did not

escape her, but she had the tact to ignore it ; and, in a few moments, leaving her at Mr. Lisle's door, he was alone again.

"She is very pretty, very charming, but——" he said to himself, and left the sentence unfinished. The wonder was that he ever could have finished it without the conjunction. How had he ever imagined that he preferred Hannah Lisle before all other women? Even in imagination he could not reproduce his former state of mind regarding her. He was left with hardly a trace of that peculiar tenderness which men feel all their lives for the women upon whom they have once looked lovingly. This had been a mere boyish fancy. Now he was a man.

Encountering Pug in the evening, Tom soon discovered that Dr. Jarvis had not arrived, and that, owing to engagements in New York, he would not arrive until Monday—three days off, since this was Thursday. The sense of comfort which Tom felt at hearing the news did not last long. He grew more and more restless, and his soul was disquieted within him. He had never been so affected in the whole course of his life, and at first he could not comprehend it. That night he slept little, but paced his room until the small hours had grown larger, conjuring up all sorts of contingencies, and then combining them in the way that was least likely to happen : fully convinced, in time, that Dr. Jarvis, when he came, would drive straight from the station to throw himself upon Clover's

mercy, and that she would be so touched by this proof of his earnestness as to accept him then and there. It was as if that irrevocable "yes" in favor of the other man had already been pronounced, giving Tom a sharp, physical pain, which made him drop into a chair trembling. He laughed; he was foolish, absurd. Nothing that he had heard could warrant this conclusion. It was not so; it would not be so: but if it were to be so, he could not bear it, and his eyes filled with tears. What was the trouble with him? Ah! The trouble was that, from liking Clover Stanhope, he had fallen desperately in love with her. He had found that out at last—perhaps too late.

Toward morning he threw himself down, and fell into an uneasy sleep, disturbed by dreams. Waking long after the usual hour, he hurried to his daily task, which was performed sufficiently well, he supposed, though he could not tell exactly how. That night, according to his promise, he dined at Mr. Lisle's. Clover was there too, as he had supposed she would be; but she sat between the host and Grip, so that Tom, placed far away on the opposite side of the table, had little opportunity to talk with her. He held his own very well, though his sleepless night had given him an unusual pallor, which made Mr. Lisle whisper to his neighbor that Tom was looking out of sorts. It was probable, however, that the others did not observe this, since he did his best to seem at ease. He watched Clover narrowly throughout the even-

ing; once, particularly, when the name of Dr. Jarvis came up. She neither changed color at it, nor turned a hair, so to speak, that he could discover. But this fact tortured Tom instead of consoling him. He was in a position to draw the worst rather than the best inferences, and no attitude of which Clover could be conceived capable at that moment would have brightened his outlook in the least.

Two wretched days and nights succeeded, plunging their victim deep into the pangs of blind, unreasoning jealousy. At one moment he mentally accused Clover of duplicity in its worst form; wearing the mask of kindness she had deliberately concealed from him her friendship for the man whom Tom now believed to be his rival; and she had done this with dark motives that he did not attempt to specify. In the very next instant he withdrew the unspoken charge, to blame only himself for not knowing his own mind soon enough. He had been a fool, and must pay the penalty, having forfeited all claim to her affection by his folly. It was impossible that she could care now for a creature so colorless, so despicable. The brilliant man would go in and win on Monday morning. Then he must hold his peace forevermore, dance at her wedding with a smiling face, and die of it, probably, an hour afterward.

But it was Clover's habit always to receive visitors on Sunday evening, and, with the view of basking once more in her genial presence before

the gloom of chaos settled down, Tom took his place among them. He went late, after one or two false starts; he was, in fact, the last to come, and, as it followed very naturally, the last to go. While there were others in the room he played his indifferent little part fluently and well; but when the others had gone, and Clover and he sat alone together, face to face, Tom's tongue grew heavy. Becoming conscious of this, he struggled to throw off the weight—vainly; he knew that he uttered only commonplaces, inanities even. At last, after a speech which, to Clover's ill-concealed surprise, was positively incoherent, he rose abruptly and declared that he must go.

She gave him her hand, wondering more and more.

"Why, Tom," she said, "you are trembling. Mr. Lisle thought you looked far from well. What is the matter with you?"

"The matter!" he repeated, wildly. "Don't you know? Can't you guess?"

Clover did not answer. But her cheeks turned scarlet, and she looked as if she would like to run away.

"Can't you see?" Tom continued, now quite beside himself. "I love you—that's the matter with me."

At this astounding statement Clover lost all self-control, and actually did make a dash for the door; but Tom, intercepting her, set his back against it.

"Stop!" he cried. "One moment! I am poor, I have nothing to offer. But I will work for you, slave for you, die for you. If you don't care for me, it will be my death. I don't know what I am saying; I can't speak; I can't think. I'm half mad, you see, and—and—no matter! Clover, I love you!"

The girl burst into tears, and hid her face in her hands. Her figure swayed a little, as if she were going to fall; yet it was not to save her from falling that Tom caught her in his arms. She made no resistance, but laid her head upon his shoulder, sobbing.

A moment more and all was settled. Clover had admitted in a shy whisper that she could love him. She did not confess, until long afterward, that she had loved him half her life.

The next hour flew. They sat by the fire forecasting their future in its glow. They could not be married for a long while, of course. They would make a small mystery of their engagement at first, and keep it absolutely secret for the present. Only Clover thought it her duty to tell her father and mother at once; and Tom, consequently, claimed the right to tell Grip and Mr. Hazeltine.

He walked home under the stars so happy—so happy! It seemed impossible that any soul they looked down upon could feel the joy of being, as he did now. All his problems were solved; no misfortune should discourage him henceforth, unless it were one befalling Clover. But that thought

he dismissed instantly. Fate would never be so cruel to him as that!

At his door he looked up. His own windows were dark. Grip must have gone to bed long ago. Poor Grip! But a ray of light shone through old Jerry's curtains; so Tom dashed up the stairs, three at a time, knocked at his door, and then bursting in, found him seated under the reading-lamp with a big book in his hand.

"Bless my soul, Tom! What is it?"

"I'm engaged—to Clover Stanhope!" Tom gasped.

"Thank God!" cried Jerry, letting the book fall. "Hip—hip—hurrah!" Then a merry twinkle came into his eyes and he laughed. "So you obeyed orders—and observed."

"Then you're not sorry!"

"Sorry! It's what I've wanted all along. How could you help seeing it? Quick! Fill up those glasses and drink with me. The bride's health!"

When this rite had been performed, Tom proceeded to tell how it all happened, recounting his doubts, his fears, his agonies, and finally their unpremeditated issue. Through it all Mr. Hazeltine chuckled, laughed, and slapped his knee with delight.

"Good—good!" he said, at last. "I meant to scare you, and, it seems, I did so. *Pars magna fui!* Nothing could be better—nothing."

When Tom gave the signal for going, the old man drew himself up, preparing to rise and ac-

company his guest to the door. But Tom interfered.

"No!" said he, with a quick advance, gently pushing Mr. Hazeltine down into his chair; "don't get up, please. Good-night!"

"Good-night!" repeated Jerry, yielding. Then he drew Tom down, and kissed him tenderly upon the forehead. "Strange!" he said, with a contented smile. "How the old times come back! God bless you, Tom! You have your mother's eyes."

The eyes were so full of happy tears that Tom could hardly see his way down to the lower rooms. Greatly to his surprise, they were now ablaze with light. Grip was up and dressed, pacing their little parlor to and fro.

"Well!" he said; "I thought you were never coming home. I have been sitting up with a bit of news to tell you. I am engaged."

"What!" cried Tom. "Why, so am I."

Then, with much laughter, they embraced, congratulated each other, and compared notes. Tom described his adventures in detail, and Grip, it appeared, had made his Sunday evening call too, but with the fixed intent of bringing affairs again to a crisis. This time Hannah had heard him out patiently; and, after protesting that she did not deserve such devotion, and was not half good enough to be his wife, she had ended by accepting him.

"I told her that I was not good at all," said Grip, lightly; "but only persevering. It just had

to be, that's the long and short of it. The persevering man always conquers."

"Not always," thought Tom. But he did not express the thought. He was long in getting to sleep that night, yet, at last, slept well. Once only he woke with a start, convinced for the moment that the shock of some violent noise or blow had roused him. He listened, but all was quiet. Yet still feeling vague uneasiness, he rose, struck a light, and going cautiously out, looked into Grip's room. His brother was sound asleep, breathing regularly. So Tom went back to bed, and soon dropped off again into pleasant dreams.

In the morning, however, he was awakened suddenly by Grip, who stood over him with a white face.

"Tom! Tom!" he cried. "Get up and come with me."

"What is it?" Tom demanded, starting to his feet in alarm.

"Jerry Hazeltine died in the night. He was found, just now, where he had fallen, upon the floor."

"Dead?"

"Dead—and cold."

They went upstairs together. The dead man had been moved into his chamber, and lay there stretched out upon the bed which he had not disturbed. His eyes were closed, his face was peaceful. Death must have come instantly without pain.

"Where did they find him?" asked Tom, shrinking away into the other room.

"There—just there," said Grip, pointing toward the chair and table, which stood just as Tom had last seen them. There he saw now the extinguished lamp, the empty glasses, the large book with one leaf turned down.

It was a volume of Spenser's "*Faerie Queene*." Tom opened it mechanically at the marked place, and read there with a start of wonder—so apt the lines seemed :

"What if some little payne the passage have,
That makes frayle flesh to feare the bitter wave ;
Is not short payne well borne, that bringes long ease,
And layes the soule to sleep in quiet grave ?
Sleepe after toyle, port after stormie seas,
Ease after warre, death after life, does greatly please."

CHAPTER VI.

THE CHÂTEAU ON THE LOIRE

THE day after the funeral Jonas Buck, coming in with a rush, called Tom into his private office and shut the door.

"Here!" he said; "I want you to read this," thrusting, as he spoke, a paper into Tom's hand.

The document was not a long one; its sum and substance being that Jeremiah Hazeltine did hereby make and publish his last will over his hand and seal, giving, devising, and bequeathing all his property, real and personal, of every nature, where-soever situated, to Thomas Sylvester, of Worthingham.

The words danced, grew blurred and indistinct; and Tom sank speechless into a chair with his hand over his eyes.

"Why, Thomas!" said Mr. Buck, kindly, "what ails you?"

"I don't understand why—I can't believe it."

"Nonsense. It's all right—he hadn't a near relative in the world. And you needn't be so staggered by it—'t isn't much—only seventy-five or eighty thousand dollars. Fret not thy gizzard!"

"What!" said Tom, faintly, letting fall the paper, which Mr. Buck immediately caught up.

"Yes. That's about the figure, I guess. It ain't a fortune, but it's better than a poke in the eye with a stick. And I'm named as executor—do you see? So I'll do my best to make it pan out well for you. We can't tell about these things, and it's just as liable—as liable—to be a very little more."

Seventy-five or eighty thousand dollars! It seemed to Tom as if Golconda's doors had sprung open for his benefit. His breath was fairly taken away, and he could only thank Mr. Buck very feebly. These, then, were the "prospects" at which he had so darkly hinted.

The news spread rapidly, and Tom was congratulated on all sides. That night he held with Clover a long, important conference, to which her father and mother were finally called in. Together they decided that the engagement might now be announced at once, and that the wedding might take place much sooner than had been expected; in fact, almost as soon as Grip's, which was already fixed secretly for a date three months off.

"I am so thankful that Tom is to be married," Jane was confiding to her husband at the same moment. "But for that, all this money would ruin him I am sure."

"My dear child," returned Mr. Larkin, "I would trust Tom, married or single, with double the amount. But a good wife is better than a million. I'll vouch for that."

Whereupon Jane flung her arms around his neck and kissed him.

For the next few days the happy pair busied themselves with the pleasant task of writing letters to the intimate friends who must be told before their happiness was made public. Then came the announcement, followed by the formal visits, dinners, and congratulations which overwhelmed them. How many friends they had all at once! and how interesting it was to compare their expressions of approval, spoken and otherwise! Hal Rodney wrote a dozen pages of hilarious joy and flippant fatherly advice; then, suddenly changing his tone, closed his letter with a serious proposal of very great moment indeed.

"I do hope," he said, "that you will decide now to break with Bolton and all his works. You are too good for that sort of thing. Now, I have a suggestion to make, which amounts, I may say, to a definite offer. Our business is growing on all sides, as you know. We can't be in all places at once, and personally, I find rushing from pillar to post unbearable. What with the affairs my father gives us and our other connections, I have to come on to Worthingham much too often for my comfort. We have therefore determined to set up a branch, or, at least, a correspondent there. You are the man for that place, if you will accept it. Think this over, and don't answer hastily. I will send you facts and figures, in a few days, which may influence your decision and cause it to be

favorable. Wait for these before answering at all."

Here was food for thought that led to solemn consultations between the families. But another matter, although of slighter importance, agitated Tom and Clover even more than this. They must have a roof over their heads—a permanent home, all to themselves; and no house that they could find in the market proved to be at all suited to their fastidious tastes.

Over this little difficulty they grew, at last, almost desperate.

They had been considering it in one of their afternoon walks "away from people," as they said. They were strolling, hand in hand, through the Rodney farm, and, coming suddenly out of the orchard to an open hillside, they stopped to look at the view which stretched away toward the south with hardly a house in sight.

"I've got it, Clover!" cried Tom, merrily. "We'll buy this, and build a château here—just here."

"A château!" repeated Clover, laughing.

"Well, why not? Every man's house is his castle, isn't it? And 'house' is too poor a word for us. I have always wanted a château, and now or never is the time to build one."

"It is a lovely place," said Clover. "But can we? and will he sell it?"

"Of course, he will, if I ask him. What is an acre more or less to old Rodney?"

Tom did ask him forthwith, and, Mr. Rodney consenting, the details were promptly arranged; so, in an incredibly short time, the ground was broken and the work began.

One fine spring morning the foreign mail brought Tom two letters. The first, from Marmaduke, was brief and in a bantering vein. He rejoiced that Tom had undertaken marriage, that is, if he desired to be so hampered—every man to his taste. But he regretted profoundly Tom's intimation that this step would undoubtedly keep him in America. He and Norman were making a success of it in London. They had hoped to lure Tom back to them. Perhaps, even now, it was not too late. Did Tom remember, *par hasard*, a certain old cynic, Marshall by name, American by birth, who had lived in England nearly forty years. Well, at a dinner he had just said to Marmaduke a capital thing worth repeating, namely, this:

“‘The mission of America is to vulgarize the world!’”

Let Tom read and ponder that! And pondering, pack his trunk for a land of tradition, as yet unspoiled by the rough hand of barbarism; bringing his wife, too, if that should seem essential. They would be glad to see him, with or without her, the sooner, the better. And thus the letter ended.

Tom laughed, remembering how short a while ago he would have held this to be good advice. Now, all was changed. He had given Hal Rod-

ney's offer his acceptance, to take effect in another month. And Europe was farther from him now than the soap-bubbles of his childhood.

The second letter, a longer one, was from Mrs. Norman Mallow.

“BEECHGATE, MASON'S HILL, KENT.

“DEAR TOM: We are both so glad for your sake, and only hope that Miss Stanhope is good enough for you. I want very much to see her, but fear that won't be possible for a long time, at least. So you must send me some likeness of her immediately and tell her, with my love, that you are the best fellow in the world.

“We have a little box of a place down here, near Chiselhurst, only half an hour from London. It is the prettiest place that ever was, the grass is green in our garden all the year round, and I am thankful that, with all my love for France (and you know I was very fond of it, Tom) I have not yet lost my appreciation for dear old England. As for my family, they were never so happy. Norman, who sends you all kinds of messages, keeps wonderfully well, in spite of business—perhaps, because of it. Between ourselves, he and Marmaduke are doing more than they expected, and the prospect seems to be bright.

“With Gresham all is exactly as I predicted. He has plans—plans—plans—and nothing else. His new house is not yet organized, he writes. No! and it never will be. He is rolling in money

and he will just roll out into the Bois with that woman, every afternoon, for the rest of his life. It is very pleasant to have money, and yet I don't envy him.

"And now I must tell you one piece of news that is very sad. It's about Una Vandermere—Madame la Baronne de Rozières. The Baron, it seems, was horribly jealous, and led her, from the first, they say, a dreadful life. So a good deal of talk went on about him, and about her too—though, for my part, I don't believe one word of that. But now there has been a scandal, very carefully hushed up, so that I don't know all the facts. I do know, however, that the Baron went off into Belgium and fought with the Vicomte de Marsan, who was wounded, but only slightly. And Una is living alone, somewhere in Germany, and—this is the worst of it—she has taken to chloral. It is said by those who have seen her to be a hopeless case. She has become the merest shadow of the Una we knew. Is not all this too terrible?

"Good-by, dear Tom! We wish you, again and again, all possible happiness. Think sometimes, in the midst of it, of those here who never forget you, and believe me,

"Always your friend,

"ELEANOR MALLOW."

Poor Una! Tom shivered as he read the words, which meant, he saw plainly, that she was done for in this world. Then, putting away the letter, he

contrived before long to dismiss it altogether from his mind. His new happiness was too keen to let him dwell long upon a life which had slipped away into the past. It often seemed to him that not he, but another man, had shared in those things.

Late that afternoon Clover and he walked out to the farm, where the frame of their house was already going up. It could not be done in time for the wedding, of course; but in the early winter, if all went well, life there would begin. They inspected the work on all sides, and finally climbed upon one of the floor-beams, just put into place.

"Which room is this?" Clover inquired.

"My den, I think. Yes; the window will be there—my desk here, and over it I shall hang old Jerry's violin."

Clover did her best to imagine how it would look, but failed. "I can't carry plans in my head," she complained. "I don't see at all how it goes."

"Let me show you," said Tom, pulling out a bit of paper for a diagram.

"What is that?" Clover asked. "A letter?"

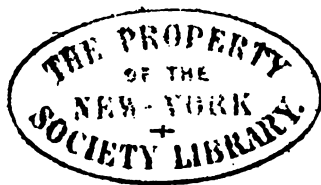
"Oh, yes—from Marmaduke. I forgot to tell you." And he read the letter, making some judicious omissions, until at one point she stopped him, and begged him to repeat the words.

"'The mission of America is to vulgarize the world,'" he read again, with a smile.

Clover's eyes flashed, and she tossed her head. "Then the mission of Americans is to improve

America," said she. "Tell the fine gentleman to come home and attend to his duty."

"He doesn't concern himself with duty," Tom replied. "He lives only for the supreme gratification of his own five senses. We can spare him very well, my dear, I think. He has left his country, 'for his country's good,' as Mr. Buck would say."



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